

# SPIRITUAL LIFE

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# Editorial

GOD became man so that man, every man, could become God, by partaking of the life of God. God became incarnate in the human body of Christ. Those who saw and heard Christ were seeing and hearing God. God is still incarnate in the Mystical Body of Christ, the Church. Those who are incorporated into the Church, come alive with the life of Christ, and share the divine life of the Trinity.

Now the whole purpose of the Church is just that: to introduce us into the life of Christ, and then to make that Christ-life grow in us until we come to think like Christ, and love like Him, and act like Him. That is the one big job the Church has to do: draw us into Christ, make us other Christs. It's easy to get muddled about this. It's easy to think that the Church has a welter of equally important things to do — educate, convert, build sacred edifices, hold services. It's not so. The absolutely unique and essential business of the Church is to transform men into Christ. If it's not doing that, its organization, numerical strength, its cathedrals, clergy, sermons, missions, its dioceses, parishes, and religious orders are a waste of time.

Our Lord said: "I have come that you may have life, and have it more abundantly." He instituted His Church and sent His Holy Spirit for the same purpose. Dioceses, parishes, and religious orders exist today for no other reason. Here one can do no better than re-express the thought of George Shuster, written more than twenty years ago in *The Catholic Spirit in America*.

Until recently the most pressing Catholic task in America has been to keep the faith alive, to build up a steadfast society of practicing members, and to defend it against abuse. As a result, religious thinking has been predominantly apologetic. Catholics were necessarily exposed to a never ending series of arguments about every detail of a complex creed, and children were prepared for life by slavishly committing to memory the questions and answers of the catechism, and by an unattractive conformity. The tenor of popular Catholic belief became almost entirely logical and intellectual. Indeed, the priests were regarded, first and foremost, as



"authorities" whose business it was to know, to command, and to reprimand. The layman was an adjunct individual whose main function was to submit to authority and believe what he heard. Catholics were a cautious, careful minority finding unpretentious pathways that were safe and secure. To a large extent it had to be that way due to the precarious circumstances in which the Church lived. If the strictures which have hemmed in American Catholics involved a loss of creative freedom, they have nevertheless aided in achieving what was then fundamental and imperative: religious socialization. But it must be apparent to everyone that this was certainly not an ideal state of affairs: based, as it was, on an incorrect theory of pedagogy, and growing out of a created condition not normal to full-grown spiritual life. It is painfully obvious that today something more must be attempted.

Being on the defense too long destroys morale; and besides it is apparent that Catholicism has everywhere in general been experiencing an awakening of its creative and intellectual forces. One cannot doubt that unless it supports the numerous cultural advances that at present characterize it here in America, its grip on men will relax and its service to the nation will be a mere fraction of what might have been.

The Church in America has had for years a good deal of numerical strength. And because the nation has felt the weight of Catholic numbers, man's behavior has been influenced. But we must be wary of numerical strength. Many people respect it, but it remains the weakest, and most unwholesome, the least spiritual of all forms of power. Numerically weak organizations do not take to it; neither do men marked by individuality of mind — and they are often our best thinkers. It is one thing to stamp out an offensively antireligious or scurrilous motion picture: *a large number of men can do that*. It is quite another thing to positively and creatively affect the cinematic art performance itself so that there will be frequent productions more worthy of reasonable citizens: *only a special type of men can do that*.

An organization can refuse to be anything more than a crowd. And that is why so many societies with very honorable names seem to get along without regret on crowd diets, as they are constantly being fed with boxing bouts, banal comedy, jazz concerts, dubious

feminine displays, deplorably bad oratory, and notoriety (how the honored guest became notorious isn't important).

Should not Catholic culture — now that we can afford to be less apologetic and more deeply enamored of our rich and effusive inner sources of life — produce cultured Catholics? This culture — the one permanent, robust, and enduring thing in all the world; the tradition that gave to the world its greatest saints, scholars, artists; the mother of the mystery plays, cathedrals, Gregorian chant — should it not now in its mature American form make its living members more human, more intelligent, more capable of decision, leadership, and government? Can we now expect Catholics to be superior, to be different, to excel?

It is true that the primary purpose of the Church is not to make nicer men, but brand new men living on a supernatural level. But should not these new men necessarily have nicer ways, better manners, and more beautiful art? Should not every one of these men be a special kind of artist?

"By their fruits you will know them." We have more to offer than apologies for our faith. We have divine life to offer. Men will not know the Church until they see that our fruits are so full of life and energy and creative power, they will be compelled to admit an inexhaustible, infinite, living font. We must share our treasure with them.

One of the healthiest signs of life today is the progress being made by the liturgical movement, spearheaded by His Holiness, Pope Pius XII. Even now, as this is being written, a very large and responsible representation of liturgists are meeting in Assisi to discuss and determine ways and means for a better and more active and intelligent lay participation in the *liturgy*, which is the best system of popular education this world has ever known — "the primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit." At this meeting leaders of the world-wide Liturgical Movement received the stirring encouragement of His Holiness to push on with the work of revitalizing the public worship of the Church.

Let George Shuster speak for himself about this educative aspect of the liturgy: "In this marvelous, symmetrical blending of dogma and mystical insight, of sacrifice and prayer, charity and intelligence, there is fully expressed a faith which when reduced to



intellectual outlines, however correct, always seems a little bleak and acrid. And about all this, like the glow which rests upon a perfect landscape, there lies a sacred glory, a loveliness, which transcends every other literary work of man. If those who have been deeply offended by some particular phase of Catholic apologetic, possibly with the result that they have kept angrily aloof from Catholic things ever since, would only read the text of the missal, or the *Missa de Defunctis* over which Bach and Beethoven pondered! They could hardly fail to realize then that the love of God fills to the brim the faith that has lived on from the tomb of the Apostles.

"Some day we shall restore liturgy to its rightful place as the rhythm and the meaning of Catholic life; and having done that we shall see round the sanctuary once again, the myriad carven forms of men's aspiration, and show forth the wonderful ecstasy of heaven even in our profane songs. Liturgy is community religion; art is community intuition. Neither can flourish in cramped quarters, and Catholics even today live in something like an armed camp."

That was written more than twenty years ago. Much has been done since then. But much remains to be done.

A diocese is not a shell or ghetto into which Catholics gather and hide themselves and confine their activities for the purposes of peace and self-preservation and incontamination. It is the framework in which Christ acts in the world, through the Church and its sacramental life. It is through the instrumentality of all the organized elements of a diocese that Christ lives on among men, not for the purpose of coddling and consoling them, but to fulfill His earthly mission which is to glorify God and save all men. The total function of every Catholic diocese in the world is to gather together as many men as possible into the life of Christ, and commit them to His mission. To do this with maximal efficiency, it needs the unified, intelligent, complementary, planned activity of parishes and religious orders.

It seems indisputable that better work could be done in American dioceses by a more thorough and exact knowledge of the respective roles of parishes and orders. Religious are not being used effectively toward diocesan objectives because pastors and even bishops do

not recognize the specific scope of particular religious orders in their dioceses. Each order has a special function to fulfill in the Church. The men (or women) of an order have been formed and shaped by a certain kind of rule and spirit and tradition; they have been trained for definite purposes. They are — generally speaking and without excluding a wide range of individual differences within the same order — experts and specialists in one specific field of spiritual endeavor. Our people will be served to best advantage not when these men are called upon just to “fill in,” or substitute, or do whatever they want, or what anyone else could do just as well; but rather when they are asked to enhance pastoral care in virtue of their special function in the Church and the particular contribution they are capable of as certain kinds of religious with definite kinds of training. This does not rule out “filling in,” etc. It merely subordinates these accidental performances to the essential duties involved.

It may help at this point to give a concrete example. The Discalced Carmelite Order is primarily contemplative; its activity is very limited and specialized. Its chief activities are spiritual direction and retreat work. Normally, Discalced Carmelites work with those who seek to intensify their spiritual life. If, for instance, a pastor wanted to do something with mental prayer in his parish, a slight knowledge of St. John of the Cross and St. Teresa of Ávila, and of the origin and rule of Carmel might inspire him to call on a Carmelite. Whereas, if he wanted a mission he would probably have recourse to a Servite, Redemptorist, Passionist, etc. If he desired a liturgical mission, he might do well to have a Benedictine, and so on.

On the other hand, religious ought to be far better acquainted with the exigencies of pastoral life. They ought to know the tone and quality and characteristics of a people, insofar as this is possible. They ought, above all, to be unstinting in their contribution, giving all of their time and energy and talents to the purposes of the pastor or bishop who has called upon them for help. The religious superior, moreover, should not send just any man, but he should send the right man for this particular job.

A practical question immediately comes to mind. How can the diocesan clergy and the religious who work with them acquire an



adequate appreciation of each other's roles in fostering the spiritual life of the diocese? It would be unrealistic to suppose that the majority of either group would read sufficiently to achieve that kind of knowledge.

Could not the desired end be reached if the bishop met with his pastors and the superiors or representatives of the religious orders within (or working with) the diocese? If these meetings were held frequently and intelligently enough, a sufficient degree of mutual understanding should result to guarantee a concerted and united kind of pastoral effort that would assure the diocese of a rich, vibrant, full-grown spiritual life.

Moreover, would not the spiritual endeavors of the diocese be furthered if a whole galaxy of key laymen were enlisted by the bishop in a more positive and active way? I am thinking particularly of educators — professors and writers; for they are the ones who are creating public consciousness, who are molding public opinion.

No longer must the Church be preoccupied with defending and preserving itself, but with leavening the mass. The solution to this problem of leavening does not fall upon clergy and religious exclusively, but upon all those who are willing and qualified to give it their attention. Though it be somewhat bold to say with Oscar Wilde that "Rousseau changed the world with a great literary style," it is nevertheless true that morals, aesthetics, ideas, science attractively expressed constitute culture as modern man understands it. Leon Bloy's conviction that truth ought always to be clothed in splendor means for one thing: wherever there is a Catholic Church, there should be a Catholic culture. The goodness, beauty, and truth of the Mystical Body of Christ should flow through its members, enliven their worship, and enhance their work.

It will no longer suffice for ecclesiastics to shout "lend me your ears" to laymen who receive the faith by hearing. They must beg them or allow them "to lend their hands"; for they learn and spread the faith by doing. And all men have the right to judge us by our fruits.

# A Diocese and the Spiritual Life

*Most Rev. Richard J. Cushing, Archbishop of Boston*

SUPERFICIALLY, there might seem to be very little resemblance between the dioceses of modern times, presided over by their bishops, and the territories of the ancient world which fell to the lot of the first Apostles. It is a far cry surely from the complicated organisms through which the bishops of the present day exercise their jurisdiction and the simple, direct methods of saving souls which were successful in the primitive Church. The complaint has sometimes been made that the Church has become "bureaucratized"; that the relations between the Church's ministers and the faithful have taken on too many of the forms of modern business; that the material problems with which every bishop must be concerned have created a situation in which spiritual progress seems to be merely a by-product of growth which is measured by buildings and bank balances. Or, in the language of theology, it might seem that the Church's function of ruling has become predominant over its functions of teaching and sanctifying, and that these latter functions afford little more than a respectable pretext for establishing and maintaining a far-flung and closely integrated organization whose ultimate purpose is realized in the material influence which it exercises in contemporary society.

The Church has, indeed, been compared to a "big business." Its growth has been studied in scientifically compiled statistics; its increasing wealth has become a topic of conversation in financial circles. Its successful dealings with the problems of human psychology have been admired and held up for imitation by those who must face similar problems in worldly enterprises. Great statesmen whose interests are avowedly secularistic have given material support and encouragement to the Church because they



have learned from experience that the Church's power has a value which can be measured on the tickers of the stock exchange and in the results of political campaigns. Points of view toward religion such as those set forth in the fourteenth century by Machiavelli, who respected the power of the Church while despising its spiritual objectives, are evident in modern times as well.

### *The Church's Divine Mission*

It should be a matter of serious concern for all who do the work of the Church that their efforts are thus in danger not only of misinterpretation, but of disastrous integration with the godless trends of modern political and social philosophy. There is reason to fear that in our eagerness to strengthen the Church through the multiplication and extension of its material resources we may be losing sight of the real purpose for which the Church was instituted by Christ. We who love the Church must not be guilty of the blasphemy of thinking of it, and of the labors which we expend in its service, in terms which betray our lack of faith in the truth of the Church's divine foundation and mission. If we do not direct our efforts toward the spiritual objectives of the Church's ministry, our pride in the external growth of the Church becomes sinful, and our programs of Catholic Action will lose the respect of thinking men. Worse still, in trying to build the Church as a façade which covers no inner spiritual framework, we are sacrificing the essential element which alone can assure the Church's survival amid the accidents of human history.

It is wrong to look for a definition of the Church in modern times which would not have been applicable to the Church in the first years of its existence. Essentially, the Church must remain what it was when Christ instituted it and what He Himself intended it to be until the end of time. This means that the modern diocese, with its offices and agencies and highly developed organization, if it corresponds to the divine plan which alone can lead it to success, must fulfill the same function which was fulfilled in the early Church by the groups which gathered around each of the Apostles, as he continued Christ's work in the part of the world which fell to his lot as one of the first bishops. Every diocese is an exact replica in the circumstances of modern life of

those original segments into which the Church became organized as the first bishops set about the work of sanctifying the souls of men which Christ Himself had entrusted to them. The bishops of today, in union with the Holy Father and subject to his supreme jurisdiction, are the successors of the Apostles who looked up to St. Peter as the first Vicar of Jesus Christ. So too the faithful, who recognize their bishops as their spiritual leaders, form today the membership of the same Church which has endured through the centuries as the organism through which the fruits of Christ's Redemption are diffused and the presence of Christ perpetuated in the world.

Each diocese is, therefore, an integral part of the Church of Christ. Each bishop, within his own diocese, must safeguard the structure of the Church as it was originally conceived by its divine founder, and must direct the activity of all who labor under his jurisdiction toward the spiritual goals which were established as the Church took form under the leadership of the first bishops. Unless we look beneath what meets the eye in the modern diocesan organization to its essential elements as a unit of the Church, we lose sight of the only purpose which can justify its existence, and we fail to grasp and realize the inherent power which alone can sustain its influence.

As the Church itself is a spiritual society, in contrast with the civil society which is concerned only with the material welfare of its members, so the diocese must be concerned ultimately with extending and intensifying the life of grace in which men are purged of their human defects and formed in the likeness of Christ. A bishop's greatest responsibility is to work for the spiritual growth of the individual souls over whom he exercises jurisdiction. The means by which he discharges this responsibility must necessarily be adapted to the difficulties which he meets in his own diocese. He must devote much of his energy to supervising what others undertake to plan and execute. He must concern himself to a great extent with matters which lie on the periphery of the Church's functioning, such as building and financing and relations with the authorities of the state. He must exercise the spiritual power which he possesses within his diocese for purposes which often seem remote from the spiritual life of his people, as, for



example, when he curbs the efforts of partisan groups to use the Church for their own advantage, or when he inflicts disciplinary penalties for violation of ecclesiastical laws.

### *Spiritual Leadership of Bishop and Priests*

Yet first, last, and always the bishop is a spiritual leader, and in every function of his office he aims ultimately to bring his people into closer union with Christ our Lord in the depths of their own souls. Only to the extent that the faithful are inspired to pray harder and to carry the fruit of their prayer into the spiritual and corporal works of mercy will the objectives of diocesan organization be realized.

It is on the level of the parish that the bishop's program for the spiritual life of his people must be carried out. It has been aptly remarked that the parish is the Church functioning locally. By provision of ecclesiastical law everyone is a member of a parish; no one belongs normally merely to a diocese or to the universal Church. The works which are directed immediately by the bishop on a diocesan level are destined ultimately to strengthen the individual parishes and bring them into closer union with the Church as a whole. It is for this reason that parish priests are so important in the functioning of the diocese. A well-organized parish provides everything that is necessary for the spiritual growth of its members. In making parochial appointments the bishop always considers the particular needs of the parish and the particular qualifications of the prospective candidates. It is a well-established principle of ecclesiastical law that the parish should seek the pastor, not the pastor the parish. On ordination day the bishop refers to the new priests as his co-operators (*co-operatores ordinis nostri*). Thus he stresses the fact that their ministry is but the prolongation of his own, and that they must work with him in the tasks for which he has primary responsibility.

Within the parish, therefore, we find the spiritual forces which the bishop must direct and which the organization of the diocese must protect and develop. It is in the parish church that the waters of baptism wash away the stain of original sin. It is here that children are instructed in the rudiments of their faith and inspired with love for the ways of holiness into which the life of grace will

guide them. It is here that they gather with their neighbors and friends to offer with the priest the Holy Sacrifice by which their spiritual life is renewed. It is with the priests of the parish that they develop the spiritual friendships that are so supporting in moments of temptation, so encouraging in the struggle for material existence, so consoling as the shadows of suffering and death gather around them. It is within the parish that the great truths of divine revelation, safeguarded from corruption by the organization of the universal Church, are channeled into the minds of the faithful. It is within the parish that the policies of the Church, formulated in the light of centuries of past experience and a world-wide perspective of present needs, are presented to the people as principles of Catholic living which make them one with their fellow Catholics throughout the world.

It is no exaggeration, therefore, to say that the parish is the instrument by which the bishop realizes within his diocese the spiritual benefits which his divinely instituted office is meant to provide. The bishop must, therefore, have particular concern for everything which pertains to parish life. Above all, he will urge his parish priests to make use of the richness and diversity of the liturgy as a means of impressing upon their people the application to their lives of the truths of their faith. A parish in which the sacred ceremonies are reverently carried out and every effort made to integrate the religious life of the faithful with the liturgical rites will invariably be a source of strength in the organization of the diocese.

### *The Church Is One*

Again, the bishop will teach his parish priests to keep alive among their people a consciousness of membership in the Church. A parish must not become an isolated local unit; a parish priest must broaden the interests of his people beyond those which touch upon their own welfare. The more we think of others, the closer to God we become ourselves. A selfishly provincial parish is in danger of spiritual starvation; a parish that lives the life of the universal Church will find its vocations multiplying, its local works of charity abundantly supported, its priests and people closely united in the bonds of supernatural love.



Again, the bishop will encourage in his parishes those projects which afford opportunities for active participation of the laity. The laity should be made aware that by baptism and confirmation they share in both the rights and obligations of their bishop and their parish priests. They should not be left with the impression that they belong only to the outer fringe of the Church and that their spiritual growth is a process in which they depend entirely on the ministrations of those who have been raised to the dignity of Holy Orders.

In this connection it seems to me that methods which have proved successful in other fields have definite application to the problems of the spiritual life. In the field of education, for example, progress is made not only through the efforts of teachers to impart knowledge, but also by encouraging students to discover things for themselves. Postgraduate work consists almost entirely of individual research, guided and disciplined by professors, but carried out essentially by the students themselves. So too, progress in the spiritual life demands the activity of prayer and good works, no less than obedient conformity to ecclesiastical laws and a willingness to receive the graces which come through sacramental ministrations. The spiritual growth which each one must realize within his own soul becomes more and more possible as people become more and more familiar with the functioning of the Church, which exists not only for the benefit of its ordained ministers, but for the spiritual well-being of its entire membership.

The bishops of today, no less than the bishops of the early Church, must be shepherds of their flocks. They must organize every phase of the activity of the Church within their dioceses in accordance with the divine plan for the sanctification of souls which brought Christ our Lord from heaven to earth. In the most smoothly functioning diocesan unit the work of the Church has not even begun until the facilities through which the faithful can be reached are successful in stirring individual souls to strive for spiritual perfection. However we adapt the program of the Church to modern times, we must never substitute the means for the end. We must not multiply the works which are directed naturally toward spreading the influence of the Church, and then forget that it is the Church itself which must function through these works. If

we do, we are building for time, not for eternity, and we are making it easier for forces hostile to Christ to move into the institutions of which Christ should be the unseen Head.

Thousands of churches all over Europe were erected long centuries ago as houses of God and gates of heaven. Today many of them serve only to sustain a false religious loyalty, which is directed ultimately toward glorification of a secularistic society. The same thing can happen in our own United States unless we do God's work in God's way and for God's purposes. Every parish within every diocese and every diocese within the universal Church exists only that the work which Christ began may be continued in our own day and age. Christ's prayer must be our prayer: that all may be one; that all may become perfect in unity; that the world may know that He has been sent by the Father.

### God Needs You

Do not believe, dearly beloved brethren, that the construction of the future City belongs to thinkers alone. One does not have to be a scholar in order to participate in this great work. Every Christian is called to it. Each one in his own sphere of action can exercise an influence: "The call of the moment is not lamentation but action; not lamentation over what has been, but reconstruction of what is to arise and must arise for the good of society."

— Emmanuel Cardinal Suhard



*It would be hard to find a man more adequately equipped by nature, training, and experience to explain the function of a parish than Fr. Stack. He studied Theology at Florence, did graduate work at the Universities of Siena and Columbia, taught for more than a decade at St. Thomas Seminary, Bloomfield, and is presently pastor of St. Patrick's Church, East Hampton, Conn.*

## The Parish: Home of Sanctity

Rev. Thomas F. Stack

IN OUR day, Catholic Action and the Liturgical Movement have renewed interest in the nature and purpose of the parish and have revealed to our generation that the parish is a source of holiness. Before Catholic Action took root in our thinking, Catholics, like those around them, considered organization the great means of progress and development. We became involved in the theory of social democracy and in the practice of organizing the faithful for specific purposes. These methods, of course, are not to be condemned, but we must remember the Church is not merely an organization.

The Church is above all a spiritual, supernatural organism. The unity and order achieved by an organization remains an external or moral unity and order. An organism grows and lives. Its activity is internal, vital.

The essence of a parish is the divine life of grace flowing from the head into the body. The members share in this life of grace only if they are intimately united to the body. The divine life of grace is the essential element in the nature of the Church. The basic purpose of the Church is to give this life to her members, to help them retain it and to bring it to perfection.

### **Live With the Church**

The entire pastoral ministry is by its very institution in the direct

service of the inner life of the organism. Today, the day of Catholic Action and the Liturgical Revival, it is becoming increasingly clear that the spiritual and moral renewal of the world is not the result of external methods or organization, though these are very necessary, but of perfecting the Church as an organism, and of developing the smaller organisms or cells of the supernatural life, the parishes. As the late Pius Parsch, a great leader in the Liturgical Movement, said: "The Catholic revival has its roots in the parish community that is truly alive and truly living."

A living parish — here we find the source of holiness. A living parish not merely a live parish. In a live parish we work for Christ through the agency of many external activities; in a living parish we work in Christ, centered around the altar of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and radiating from there we engage in Christ-filled action. The live parish is superficial, on the circumference of the supernatural, with much of its activity wasted and unprofitable. The living parish is radical, fruitfully working from the center of the supernatural, conscious of its function "in Christ."

### *The Mystery of Christ*

The living parish is a fulfilling of the Mystery of Christ. It is the Mystical Body of Christ in miniature. Christ, our Lord, continues to live on in His Christians. The parish makes our blessed Lord our contemporary. The Incarnation did not have its end in the Resurrection and Ascension, but will be completed only when, at the end of the world, it receives its fulfillment at the death of the last Christian, when Christ shall raise His whole Mystical Body to the glory of His Resurrection and He shall be "All in all." The parish, a cell of the Mystical Body, is endowed with the life of Christ, His merits, His priestly powers — the parish is the contemporary Christ.

The Christ-life of the parish is functional, operating through the organism of the Sacraments, which impart, protect, develop, and fulfill the divine life in us.

In the Sacrament of Holy Orders, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is made visible and is preserved until the end of time, when the fullness of the Mystical Body is consummated. By it chosen men are anointed by the Holy Spirit to be the progenitors and preservers



of the Christ-life and so we call them Father. The pastor is the head of the body, he is Christ, he is the father of his parish family; the parish is the body, the Church, the mother of the family; the faithful are the members of the body, the children of the family.

But for the growth and continuation of the Mystical Body on earth new human beings must constantly be born into this natural life. Therefore, the state of marriage is one of holy partnership with God. Christ raised Matrimony to the dignity of a Sacrament so that husband and wife may receive the graces they need to fulfill their duty properly of rearing children unto God as true members of Christ. This concept of the dignity of Matrimony is taught supremely by the rite itself, and in a living parish the meaning of the rite is taught and is considered more important than the minutiae of the rehearsal of entrances and exits. And long before this it will have been taught in adult discussion groups of the Confraternity of Christian Doctrine and in Cana Conferences, two important organizations of a living parish.

Understanding the Sacraments of Holy Orders and Matrimony, Baptism can be fully appreciated as the Sacrament of rebirth.

Baptism is the initiation into Christ, into the Mystical Christ, into the whole Christ. We are incorporated into Christ in a parish and when that incorporation is complete we may say with St. Paul: "We live now not we, but Christ lives in us." The deep meaning of their Baptism must be made vital for the members of the parish. Baptism is not just a past event having its importance in the past. Its effects are continuing. Instruction must go far beyond the technical points of the catechism. They must be shown that the Church is the mother of their birth unto God; that she bore them in her womb, which is the baptismal font; that this her womb is made fruitful by the power of the Holy Spirit during the blessing of the font on Holy Saturday. The restored Holy Saturday liturgy stresses this profound thought and demonstrates the parochial significance of the Sacrament of Baptism, the source of our spiritual life. The restored vigil gives all our people an opportunity to hear a more vital lesson in the doctrine of Baptism than they ever found in the dry formulas of the catechism.

But in a living parish this dramatic lesson is taught not once a year but every Sunday. The meaning of their birth into God's

family may be realized by having Baptism administered before the whole congregation at one of the Sunday Masses, and this could be done at a different Mass each Sunday so that all may have the opportunity of witnessing it. But in large parishes this is not always possible, but it could be done before the afternoon or evening service. The very use of holy water is a reminder of Baptism if properly explained; and especially is this true of the use of holy water in the *Asperges* ceremony at the high Mass.

Baptism makes us children of God, but children in this world must grow up. The confirmed member of Christ is a grown-up Christian. As far as the graces of God are concerned or the energies of the Christ-life, Confirmation has made him capable of resisting all temptations and of remaining ever true to his high calling as a member of Christ's Mystical Body. Confirmation makes the members of Christ in a more complete degree temples of the Holy Spirit, bearers of God, insofar as it gives them a special fullness of the Holy Spirit, a more abundant share in the gifts of the Holy Spirit.

A further effect of the Sacrament of Confirmation is the imprinting of an indelible character on the soul, a sharing in the priesthood of Christ. In the Sacrament of Holy Orders the bishop, by imposition of hands and anointing with oil, ordains priests and officially empowers them to dispense the Sacraments. In Confirmation the bishop, also by imposition of hands and anointing, officially consecrates the baptized Christian as a lay apostle in the Church of Christ. It is the Sacrament of Catholic Action and in a living parish instruction on Confirmation revitalizes parish societies and will direct them to a more spiritual work in their programs. The day of Confirmation should be an important one not only for those who are confirmed but for the whole parish.

Participation in the Sacrifice of the Mass and in the other functions of corporate worship is the logical consequence of the priestly character matured in Confirmation. They are co-offerers in the Mass, presenting themselves and their gifts to God, all of them priests in the great High Priest, and uniting their lives in union with His Sacrifice as an offering to the Father. The present Holy Father has called for a more active participation in the liturgy, and Pius X said that active participation in the liturgy is the



primary and indispensable source of the true Christian spirit. In a living parish every opportunity will be given the parishioner to participate in the prayers and chants of the Church by means of the *Missa recitata* or the dialogue Mass and especially by singing the high Mass.

### *Healing From Sin*

There are times in our natural life when sickness and ill-health overtake us and we must have recourse to the healing action of a physician. Similarly, the member of Christ may suffer spiritual sickness or even death through sin. The ordinary remedy for this condition is the Sacrament of Penance in which the divine Physician of souls forgives sin and restores the Christ-life to full vigor and health. But in a living parish one is conscious that Penance is a Sacrament of a social nature, a Sacrament for the good of the whole parish family. Where there is a deep awareness of the parish as the Mystical Body in miniature no one can think of sin as a merely individual affair. "When one member suffers all suffer." Likewise the healing from sin. It is by no means merely individual — it has social consequences for the whole parish. The prayers of the whole parish family should be for the wandering sheep, and the joy of the parish should be like to the joy in heaven over the sinner doing penance. Following the liturgical year in a living parish one has the opportunity to practice the virtue of penance. Throughout the year are many days of penance, fasting, and mortification, and every Mass is a gift of self. The understanding of this is of real value to the spirituality of the individual and to the parish in its growth.

There is also a time of special danger to the soul, when a person is sick unto death. Bodily illness weakens the resistance of the soul, and that at a time when the prince of darkness makes a final effort to snatch the soul away from the possession of God. The Sacrament of Extreme Unction supplies the special graces and spiritual support for this important moment of struggle against the power of evil and prepares the dying member, body and soul, for the life of glory to come.

Baptism and Extreme Unction are related as beginning and end, as initiation and perfection. Therefore, Extreme Unction has

rightly been called the second rebirth, Baptism having been the first rebirth, unto the supernatural life here on earth. Extreme Unction is the second, unto glorified life in the eternal vision of God. With divine ingenuity God created this Sacrament to be the complement and consummation of Penance. By this Unction at the end of life, sin itself and the remnants of sin can be totally undone and man prepared for immediate entrance into everlasting glory. This full and positive appreciation of Extreme Unction adds new meaning to Christian death, lifting it out of the feeling of doom and fear and pity, up to the level of participating in the death of Christ, triumphing completely over all evil, making of the last hours the time of strengthening and healing the Christian soldier for his entry into his Kingdom with Christ.

Thus, the parishioner grows in our parish and is nourished from the altar. The organic and coherent character of this liturgical piety in a parish brings the quiet and strong rhythm of the Church year, as lived in the parish, into the lives of the parishioners.

When a parish draws its life from these basic supernatural ideals and realities, Catholic Action will flourish. Parish activities will revolve around that charity which radiates from the altar of sacrifice and the Communion table. Our societies will abound in the spiritual and corporal works of mercy. This spiritual life of a parish will make our people holy and apostolic.

### *The Primary Spiritual Aim of Parish Societies*

... "is to roll up our collective sleeves and give all that we have for this great crusade to bring back God into the lives of the people and to make Him better known and loved."

— Archbishop Richard J. Cushing



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## A Religious Order and the Spiritual Life of a Diocese

*James M. Egan, O.P.*

IN ATTEMPTING to explore some of the contributions that a religious order or congregation can make to the spiritual life of a diocese, we cannot overlook the long experience of the Catholic Church in regard to such co-operation. Her experience is not merely that of an ancient institution; it has been under the guidance of the Spirit of Truth, from whom have come all the vital developments that mark the passage of the Church through history.

Centuries-old experience has taught the authorities of Christ's Church the wisdom of dividing the faithful into geographical divisions, called dioceses. A diocese is a well-defined territory, governed by a bishop with ordinary power, according to the norms set down in the code of canon law. The diocese, in turn, is divided into parishes, each headed by its pastor, who possesses definite authority over the faithful living in his territory.

The bishop is the center of unity and action in each diocese. Even the Holy Father is the bishop of Rome, and it is in virtue of possessing that office that he is also the visible head of the entire Church. Roman Pontiff, bishops, priests — these are the men who have authority over the faithful of Christ's Church. Ideally, everyone of the faithful should be under one pastor, one bishop, as they are all under one pope. While the geographical divisions are of human origin, the subordination of all to the Roman Pontiff, the authority of bishops and priests, originates with our Lord Himself. It is in this way the word of God and the grace of God

flow from Christ to the faithful in every corner of the world through the hierarchy of priests, bishop, pope. As the present Holy Father, Pope Pius XII, expressed it: "For between the Apostles and their successors, with whom must also be grouped their assistants in the ministry, and the ordinary faithful He drew a definite line of demarcation; and by the union of these two elements the structure of the Kingdom of God on earth stands firm."<sup>1</sup>

### *Religious as Special Aides*

The centuries also bear witness to the esteem of the Church for religious life. At first sight, it might seem that this had led the Church to set aside the usual hierarchic order in favor of the religious. There are some religious, belonging to diocesan and pontifical congregations, who are completely subject to the bishop of their diocese. But there are a number of religious who belong to orders or to some congregations of men that are exempt from, that is, not subject to, the local ordinary.

However, this is only an apparent exception to the general structure of the Church, for as Pope Pius XII reminds us: "... perhaps too little attention has been paid to the fact that exempt religious, even by the prescriptions of canon law, are always and everywhere subject to the authority of the Roman Pontiff as their Supreme Moderator. . . ."<sup>2</sup> The privilege of exemption has been granted religious, not for the sake of removing them from the authority of the local ordinaries, but to make them more serviceable to the entire Church and therefore also to the dioceses in which they work.

Moreover, exemption affects only the members of the religious order themselves; it does not extend to the faithful with whom they work. The Holy Father sums it up in a few words: "Undoubtedly it is according to divine law that every priest, be he secular or regular, should fulfill his ministry in such a way as to be a subordinate assistant to his bishop."<sup>3</sup> And this applies equally to religious who are not priests. All work with the faithful has its

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<sup>1</sup> "Address to Religious Men," December 8, 1950. Translation in *Review for Religious*, XIV (1955), 4, p. 171.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.



efficacy as an extension of the apostolate of the bishop.

Religious are frequently requested to take over parishes or schools in a diocese. We are not concerned with this type of service, although it is a fruitful field of co-operation between religious and diocesan priests. The purpose of this article is to explore other possible services that a religious order or its members can render to the spiritual life of a diocese.

The first and indispensable service that any religious order can render to a diocese in which it has a foundation is to be eminently religious according to the aim and spirit of its founder. The first function of religious is to be seekers of perfection. This is the reason why religious life is cherished by the Church, not primarily for the services they may render.

### *Religious a Protest to Worldliness*

Religious life got its start in the deserts and wildernesses of the world. In the early centuries of the Christian era, men, filled with enthusiasm for the Christian ideal, turned their backs on the world and fled into lonely places, there to devote themselves undistractedly to the pursuit of perfection. We, today, have little sympathy with these desert fathers, though they inspired the heroic life of Charles de Foucauld and his followers. Nevertheless, such a life was a necessary gesture of defiance to a pagan world. The men who could lead such lives made it glaringly evident that the world was not the indispensable treasure it liked to advertise itself as being.

While the Church still looks favorably on the solitary life for those capable of leading it, she long ago realized that for the majority of men and women life in community is a safer way to strive for perfection. Yet the meaning of the religious profession is still the same. One is fully a religious by the three vows of poverty, chastity, and obedience. Taking them is still a gesture of defiance to the spirit of the world. For they reject in one magnificent gesture three of the world's products that are most vigorously pushed by her advertising agents. By the vow of poverty, a religious renounces the use of, and in many cases, the right to own, worldly goods. By chastity, even the legitimate satisfaction of sexual desire is sacrificed for the love of God. And obedience cuts

to the root of man's self-sufficiency by dedicating the human will to the service of God at the command of others.

Taking vows is, of course, only the beginning of religious life, which does not consist in merely keeping the vows. Freed from the encumbrances of the world, the religious dedicate themselves to prayer and mortification, as well as to the service of God and neighbor. A diocese that harbors a religious foundation has the right, then, to expect two immediate fruits. The hidden activity of prayer and mortification draws down the blessing of God upon the bishop, priests, and people of the diocese. The exterior conduct of the religious is a continual reminder to all that true happiness can be found, even here below, provided one does not look for it from the world. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you; not as the world gives do I give to you."<sup>4</sup>

Probably the most powerful example of this sort of influence that a religious order may exercise on the spiritual life of a diocese can be found in the Trappist monasteries that are providentially being multiplied throughout our land. The faithful are always welcome to visit, even for some time, and all who come into contact with these austere and devoted men are deeply moved by the integrity of their lives, stripped down to the minimum, yet deeply joyful. Cloistered monasteries of women (Trappistines, Dominican, Carmelite, Passionists, Poor Clares, and others) produce the same effect on the faithful who are fortunate to become acquainted with them.

### *They Cherish the Liturgy*

Along somewhat the same lines is the influence that can be exerted by the presence of Benedictine (and other) monasteries of either men or women. Here the faithful have a still too rare opportunity to assist at the liturgy of the Church in all its splendor and dignity. Unfortunately, many religious groups, founded at the time of the Reformation and since, as well as the parishes, felt it necessary to curtail the time devoted to liturgical services, with, perhaps, the idea of devoting more time to apostolic work. For some time, now, the Church has been aware of the loss this has meant to her life and the life of her children. The liturgy, as defined by

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<sup>4</sup> Jn. 16:27.

Pope Pius XII, "is the integral public worship of the Mystical Body of Christ, of its Head and its members."<sup>5</sup> As such, it is an essential function of the whole Church in this world that pays so little attention to the rights of God. Yet, the faithful have been little more than spectators for so long, accustomed to getting out of Church as fast as possible, that it is not easy to form the liturgical spirit in them again. It is to the credit of the Benedictines (and many other orders, of course) that they have never lost their great devotion to the liturgy and that their monasteries are places of pilgrimage for those of the faithful who have come to appreciate the role of the liturgy in their lives. It is to be hoped that other religious groups will soon forego their lengthy lists of private prayers said publicly, for the public prayer of the Church said in common.

### *The Third Orders*

Over the centuries, religious orders and congregations have developed special methods for sharing their own spiritual treasures with the faithful. These have taken the form of third orders or oblateships that are an integral part of the most ancient orders in the Church. Older orders and newer congregations have established confraternities, archconfraternities, and sodalities. Of these the Church herself gives precedence to the third orders as powerful means for enriching the spiritual life of her children.

It is to be expected that an order with a foundation in a diocese will become the center of tertiary activity, a rallying point of those members of the laity who have been attracted by the spirit of the order.

Membership in a third order (or acceptance as an oblate) is one of the greatest benefits a religious institution can offer the laity. While a tertiary as such does not always take vows and hence does not become formally a religious, they do belong to the order, publicly make promise of striving for perfection in their state of life, and submit themselves to a formation that is peculiar to the order and adapted to their condition as laity.<sup>6</sup> The third order has not only the advantage of communicating the spiritual good of an order to the laity, but also enables the order to extend its apostolate throughout

<sup>5</sup> *Mediator Dei*, November 20, 1947.

<sup>6</sup> Discalced Carmelite tertiaries do take vows.



a diocese. In their own way, the tertiaries are to carry the spirit of their order to their fellow Catholics in the parishes.

Intimately linked with the idea of the third order is that of spiritual direction. Normally, the tertiaries seek direction from members of the order with which they are affiliated. However, the service of spiritual direction is not limited to tertiaries, but all are welcome. The problem of spiritual direction is an intricate one — not to be broached in this article. However, it is being recognized more and more that spiritual direction is essential for all who wish to lead a complete Christian life. Diocesan priests, despite great difficulties, are offering such direction to members of their parishes who seek it. Yet, there is the fact that religious foundations ordinarily are better able to offer the faithful a staff of well-trained spiritual directors eager to be of service to all. In many dioceses religious are doing a great work through the apostolate of the confessional.

Thus far, we have confined ourselves to investigating the influence exercised by a religious order or congregation on the spiritual life of a diocese simply by its vital presence in a diocese. Let us now turn to some of the activities that are most fittingly accomplished by members of a religious order for the spiritual welfare of the faithful.

### *Missions and Retreats*

For decades now the religious priest has been considered by the faithful as the “missionary Father,” the priest who appeared occasionally in the parish to conduct a mission. This has in the past been one of the great contributions of religious to the spiritual welfare of a diocese. The idea behind it was a good one — it involved calling in a group of specially trained men to work intensively on elevating the spiritual vigor of a parish. True, the sermons were, as a rule, directed to the conversion of sinners, and the sanctuary of the confessional alone could reveal all the good that was accomplished.

While missions still accomplish the good they were designed to accomplish, there is a growing feeling that they are not the answer to the present-day needs of the parish, or, at least, not the whole answer. There is too much competition to the extended mission

from television, movies, and other social activities. Those parishioners who are willing to forego these activities and attend the religious exercises of a mission are capable of receiving a different type of spiritual food than is usually presented in missions. They are looking for enlightenment and encouragement to live a deeper and fuller Christian life. The growth of the retreat movement is an indication of the large numbers that are eager for a higher form of spiritual instruction.

Retreats fall into two groups: there are the formal retreats of eight, five, or three days, made in a retreat house, with all the advantages of seclusion, silence, and concentration. There are parish and school retreats that occupy only a short period of the day and leave the retreatant free to pursue other occupations concomitantly. Both have the advantage of offering to perhaps a smaller group of people a stronger incentive to Christian living.

We might take this opportunity to offer a suggestion, which, we believe, has already been tried out in some parishes and which would do much for the spiritual life of any parish. That is the idea of week-end retreats conducted in the parish. The trend in our country is to the five-day work week and this is certainly going to continue. Men now look forward to Friday afternoon as the start of a period of relaxation that lasts until Monday morning. True this period is considered by most as an opportunity for extended recreation, although many homeowners use it to do the chores around the house. Would it not be possible to induce people to dedicate, say, two week-ends a year to a parish retreat?

According to the judgment of the pastor, these retreats might be made family affairs, or they might be offered for various groups in the parish with similar interests. The preference would be, I believe, for family retreats; the atmosphere of the retreat could pervade the home. There would be a spirit of silence and recollection. Television and radio would be silenced. The family would read and pray together. It might be a time when Father and mother could speak to the boys and girls in the family on matters that should be discussed first of all in the home. Arrangements could be made for members of the parish not making the retreat to take care of the very young members of the family, at least during the day. According to the interest shown, a parish might need to

devote many week ends during the year to such retreats so as to accommodate all those who are anxious to benefit from a retreat.

For all types of retreats a generous supply of religious is a great boon to a diocese. Retreats should not become stereotyped; the kind that will appeal to some of the faithful may not impress others. But with a great variety of approach, most of the faithful will respond by a more serious concern for the demands of the Christian life.

Intimately linked with the purely spiritual apostolate of religious is the intellectual apostolate that has taken on new dimensions in the past twenty-five years. By an intellectual apostolate, we mean the effort to make available to the laity a more intimate acquaintance with theology and philosophy as these are linked up with the cultural life of the modern world. Such attempts are of urgent necessity for many sections of the faithful.

The necessity was brought home to me by a story I heard some years ago in Germany. The prior of the Dominican convent at Cologne was acknowledged to be the second-best preacher in Germany, next to Cardinal Faulhauber of Munich. He had started his priestly life as a member of the diocesan clergy of Berlin. His abilities as a preacher were soon recognized and he was given the post of official cathedral preacher in Berlin. Perhaps because of his gift for preaching, he decided to join the Order of Preachers. When he was assigned to the convent in Cologne, he was again invited to preach in its great cathedral, because of the advanced age of the official preacher. But he was not a success. Being a humble man, he asked his friends to tell him what the trouble was. One came up with the answer: he was using the same style that he had used in Berlin, but the audience was quite different. The Catholics of Berlin lived in a hostile environment; they were a minority among their Protestant neighbors. As a consequence, they needed a more intellectual approach to the faith, they wanted to be able to give reasons for the faith that was in them. Whereas the Catholics of Cologne, the heart of the Rhineland, while possibly better Catholics, lived in an environment that had been Catholic for centuries. They did not feel the need for the same type of sermon that had been a great success in Berlin.



### *Promote Religious Education*

The application is obvious. American Catholics live in a non-Catholic environment. While most of their non-Catholic neighbors are not actively hostile, they are always aware of the differences between us and them. A Catholic, with an intelligent grasp of his faith, could accomplish much in his constant contacts with non-Catholic neighbors. Furthermore, a Catholic who becomes expert in any field—in law, medicine, psychiatry, economics, sociology, education, etc.—is bound to face problems that involve the faith and he wants reasoned answers to these problems. Moreover, larger numbers of the faithful are enjoying the American privilege of higher education. They are becoming intellectually mature in various fields of human culture. It would be dangerous, even to their spiritual life, if they did not grow also to maturity in their Catholic life.

This brings us to another contribution that religious are actually making and can make to the spiritual life of a diocese. In many dioceses, there are non-Catholic institutions of higher learning, nonsectarian or state colleges and universities that number among their students more or less extensive groups of Catholic students. While in many cases these students could go to Catholic schools, there will always be legitimate reasons why some have to attend the non-Catholic schools. There is a special obligation to offer them centers of Catholic life and thought that will enable them to grow to maturity in the faith as well as in their chosen field of study. Newman clubs and similar foundations are valuable instruments for Catholic formation and religious are valuable allies of the diocesan clergy in the successful operation of these centers.

A spiritually alert diocese will have two further preoccupations—a deep concern for all those living within the diocese who do not belong to the Church of Christ and an awareness of the needs of the Church in missionary countries. Religious orders and congregations, some of whom, like the Paulists are specially dedicated to the apostolate to the non-Catholic, most of whom have a proportion of their members working in mission fields, are well able to keep these fields before the attention of the faithful with whom they work.

The apostolate to the non-Catholic in a diocese is primarily the work of the faithful themselves under the direction of their parish priests. Inquiry classes, conducted in each parish, to which neighbors can be invited is a fruitful source of conversions. Nevertheless, members of religious orders can effectively co-operate in this apostolate by conducting information centers, special missions or retreats, lectures. Most of all, they can develop techniques of convertmaking and supply priests and people with the fruits of their experience.

The American Church is providentially destined to be the support of the missions for some time to come. We are aware of the great generosity shown by European countries in centuries past, of which we, too, have been the beneficiaries. Now it is our turn to supply both missionaries and support to the missions. Unquestionably God's blessing will fall on the diocese that is generous with its children and its resources that the word of God may be preached to all men.

The presence of religious in a diocese brings out the diversity that exists in the Church and such diversity is willed by God for the perfection of the Church. Each religious group has its own contribution to make; yet each must not insist on its own good to the detriment of the common good of the diocese, which is in the care of the bishop. On the other hand, the bishop must respect the distinctive character of the religious groups in his diocese. With such mutual respect, the common good of all the faithful will always be served by the united efforts of diocesan and religious priests.

*The late Msgr. William Russell, author of many books — Christ the Leader, Jesus the Divine Teacher, etc. — had long contemplated the problem of presenting a mature, vivid, attractive approach to a spirituality for Americans. In this article, prepared for the Carmelite Fathers before his death, he discusses a program for arriving at the full potential of the spiritual life to which we in America have been called,*

## American Spirituality

Rt. Rev. W. H. Russell, Ph.D.

TO A large extent we are an amalgam in this country. And that increases the difficulty of outlining an achievable goal for American spirituality. We could indeed learn from French spirituality, German spirituality, Italian spirituality. However, God expects us to be ourselves, while yet striving to be integrally Catholic. It would seem that the unselfishness and the manliness of Christ have a special appeal for American Catholics.

Some may think it preferable to make the saints the predominant spiritual heroes. Each nationality in Europe has its favorites. But we should not seek to transplant the saints merely because of their appeal to this or that nationality. All saints have this in common: they are holy to an heroic degree. Their magnificent contribution has been to keep before us the one thing that counts with God — holiness. Americans, like any other people, quickly turn to admiration when confronted by holiness in the flesh. What we need, of course, if we wish to better American spirituality, is more holiness.

Is it not possible to portray the holiness of Christ the Man? While the saints are, to a degree, universal types, God expects that we constantly mold ourselves on that primary and universal type of spirituality — the spirituality practiced by the Son of Man. He alone is above all nationality. He laid down the corner stone of spirituality when he said: "Learn of me." The positive and distinctive features



of our spirituality are to be modelled on his manner of living. Not only did he die for our sins but he lived his life as Man as a pattern for all to follow. No nation can be integrally Catholic if it fails to give him primary place in the household of spiritual ideals. The weaknesses, the failures of our lives are to be corrected by gazing at him.

In a brief article it is impossible to set down all the principles of the spiritual life. Certain dominant themes proposed by Christ are, however, at hand. I refer to his aim, the double command, the Our Father, and the structure of the Mass. These basic principles when properly examined will be found to contain a remedy against any "social club" characteristics, any complacency, any inferiority complex that we might possess.

What unselfishness there is in the aim of Christ! "I do always the things that are pleasing to Him." "I have glorified thee on earth." The true aim, or the purpose of living is *outside* the self, not in self-satisfaction.

This aim becomes acceptable only when we fully realize the doctrine of how God becomes our Father in baptism, and how he invites us to share his inner life. The motive of gratitude can also be brought into play by showing how God proved his love for us through the redemption. We need a deep realization of the fact that God is a *loving* Father.

In the structure of the Our Father and of the Mass we see that life is first a *giving* to God, and only when we have fulfilled that obligation should we think of human needs. Since we are sons of God, our Father's interests become our first concern. The idea of *giving* to God must always precede the idea of *getting* from God. True, God needs nothing, and we can add only to his external honor. But the principles that Christ laid down are clear.

Here is the remedy for any tendency to overemphasize humanitarian religion or even novenas. Likewise the habit of thinking of "my career" or of "success" or of dollar-chasing is offset by emphasis on the philosophy of the Our Father and of the Mass. The sordid trait of commercialism may easily creep into us here in the United States. It is no defense to say that Europeans are guilty of the same trait. We should be busy depicting the detached Christ.

Constantly Christ repeats that a happy spirituality, the develop-

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**Coming in the March**

## **SPIRITUAL LIFE**

### **THE PRIESTHOOD**

*by Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalen, O.C.D.*

The late Father Gabriel, an eminent author, was for years professor of Spiritual Theology in the International College in Rome, and Consultor to the Sacred Congregation of Rites. His lifetime goal which he achieved was: a clear and simple exposition of Teresian spirituality, a world-wide devotion to SS. Teresa and John of the Cross — to their attractive personalities and their incomparable works.

### **HOW THE PRAYER OF THE CHURCH UNITES US TO GOD**

*by Fr. Charles Magsam, M.M.*

Assistant Novice Master  
Maryknoll Novitiate, Bedford, Mass.

### **HOW THE CHURCH REGARDS SINNERS**

*by Fr. James M. Gillis*

Former editor of *Catholic World*

### **SPIRITUAL LIFE IN THE MYSTICAL BODY**

*by Sr. Francille, C.S.J.*

Editor, *Mediator*, Boston

### **YOU ARE THE MEDIATOR**

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PLUS

### **CELESTIAL CASTLES**

*by Neville Braybrooke*

ENGLISH WRITER AND PUBLISHER; CONTRIBUTOR TO  
SATURDAY REVIEW OF LITERATURE, BOOKS ON TRIAL  
AND OTHERS.







— Hal Farnum

The total function of every Catholic Diocese in the world is to gather together as many men as possible into the life of Christ, and commit them to His mission.

“Religion requires the actuation of all man’s faculties; it is in relation with all the other levels and ranges of man’s experience. The sense of beauty, the sense of truth, the sense of goodness — above all, the sense of the inadequacy of all our purely human expressions of them all, and yet that these various senses are not vain or merely subjective and simply human: all these finally imply, all are necessary to, all are in relation with, the full and healthy life of religion. The future Catholic cultural revival must be an enterprise in which clergy and laymen frankly join hands. That area in the higher life of mankind which has been homesteaded for generations by laymen must be incorporated in the city of the Church. Less of an apologist than he is now, more of a ‘swimmer in his active element’ than he is now, the layman will manifest a spirituality which (to borrow the language of philosophy) is less logical and more ontological. The manifold varieties of speculation, the arts, sciences, literary crafts, social leadership — forces which distil public opinion that makes the world into its product — must somehow be protected and irrigated by the energies of Christianity. Whenever Catholics become leaders in every department of cultural activity, culture will follow them. Not otherwise.”

— BARON VON HUGEL

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ment of personality and of a wholesome self follow from a full acceptance of his aim, from his "giving" before "getting" philosophy. The double command has the same principle. It too throws us *out* of ourselves in concern for God and for neighbor. The "giver" develops a more balanced and wholesome personality than the one who seeks constantly to "get" or to take care of himself. Duties to oneself there are indeed. But what more attractive and balanced person is there than the generous, unselfish God-Man?

The Our Father is so simple that most people never advert to its profound wisdom. Christ's intent was that we ponder the "our," the "us," the "we" of this prayer. We are a community; we are the family of God. True spirituality is not built exclusively on the principle of "God and myself." One's thinking must be in the plural. We are to approach God our Father arm in arm with other brothers in Christ. There is no need to read deep tomes of theological lore. Individualism in piety is routed when one examines the Our Father.

Certainly God is a providing Father. Human needs have their rightful place in the scheme of Christian spirituality. They are seen in proper perspective in the Our Father and in the Mass. "If you ask the Father anything in my name he will give it to you. . . . Ask and you shall receive." There is no objection to prayer for oneself, but dominantly our thinking must be social. Christ expects us to be balanced, not egocentric.

It is Christ himself who made love of neighbor just as absolute as love of God. Does not St. Paul teach that "the whole law is fulfilled in one word: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself"? It may be that too many parish activities here in the United States take the form of a "picnic" or that "social" activities predominate. Bingo does not rate high as a promoter of spirituality. But before Europeans accuse us of too much "activity," too much humanitarian religion, they should at least recognize that Christ was a Man of activity as well as of prayer. Love of neighbor today has a much wider meaning than the giving of an alms to a beggar. True spirituality is found in that Catholic who out of love for Christ interests himself in social legislation, in economic justice, in the honesty of government officials.

What we as Catholics must realize, however, is that the humani-



tarian emphasis in religion in this country must not be permitted to force us into neglect of direct worship of God. Recognition of the awesome majesty of the Creator, of our duty of praise may not come easy to the average Catholic. We must confess that many are restless while at Mass. Their restlessness would however disappear if priests were more effective in explaining to them just why they are at Mass and what they "do" at Mass. The good will is there. Their spirituality could be deepened by showing them how they participate in the Mass. Here again we can learn from Christ the man who offered his life in visible proof that the world might know that "I love the Father."

What has been written thus far adds up to the fact that Christ balanced contemplation and action. We human beings find difficulty in maintaining his balance, but the more we pattern our lives on his manner of living the more shall we approach the desired proportions. Certainly Christ did not mingle among men for the sake of good fellowship, yet he penetrated into the thinking of all classes. He himself tells us that the better-than-thou's regarded him as a "wine-bibber." He kept aloof from politics but actually the "politicians" knew him to be a tremendous force for honesty and integrity and justice to the poor.

If American spirituality is to be solid there must be much more of an effort to set forth a succinct arrangement of the virtues as they existed in Christ the Man. We use the term Christlike but it does not suggest *all* the virtues as Christ practiced them. Such virtues need to be seen first separately and concretely and then unitedly in him. Many think of him as the sorrowful Christ; they forget that there is also the joyful Christ. People hear the phrase "meek and humble" but they are not so often told of the strong Christ, the commanding Christ, the indignant Christ. Individualism in piety is promoted when the people hear only; "What does it profit a man if he gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his own soul?" and are not given the balancing thought: "He who would save his life will lose it; but he who loses his life for my sake will find it." If Americans admire honesty, integrity, forthrightness, manliness, moral courage and the "human touch," should we not show that such qualities are part and parcel of him who was "in habit found as a man"? These are essential in any Christlike spirituality.

*Poet, biographer, scholar, and critic, in more than forty books and countless articles, Mr. Maynard has grown from prominence to eminence with a sureness that would be astonishing if it had not been inevitable. But his recent death was also inevitable. One of the last things he wrote was this article for SPIRITUAL LIFE. We think it is one of his most distinctive contributions to Catholic writing and American maturity.*

## The Spiritual Heritage of America

Theodore Maynard

OVER and over again, though in slightly different words, did the celebrated American philosopher Orestes Brownson affirm what is now directly quoted from him: "Never, since the going forth from that upper room in Jerusalem, has the Church found a national character so well fitted (as is the American) to give her civilization its highest and noblest thought." Many others have said the same thing, though there is a danger that, if it is said too glibly or without sufficient thought, it may sound detestably smug. What always must be borne in mind as a corrective is that no claim should be advanced that Americans are of a breed inherently superior to the rest of mankind, but rather that the concept upon which the United States was constructed, provides its citizens with the opportunity to become superior.

The opposite side of the medal should be kept in sight: just as the Jews, the chosen people, failed when at last the extraordinary chance occurred for them to fulfill their destiny, with the result that the spiritual leadership of the world passed into other hands, so we also — who may regard ourselves as a fortunate but certainly not a chosen people — may also fail, if we lose sight of our true mission. Already when the "American Way of Life" is held up as a model for mankind, it is too often considered the crowded com-

fort of our gadget-strewn way of living. But if we invite emulation on this account, or because of our ingenious organization of our abundant sources, we run the danger of making people turn aside in disgust, or worse still, of copying our resourcefulness while ignoring the clear but intangible concepts upon which America reposes.

It does not make us beloved, though it may make others envious, that we have become the richest nation in the world. Wealth will only be an invitation to the predatory to plunder us; devastating bombs may be overcome by others still more devastating. It is not at all impossible, should we think of our way of life as being something material, for us to grow weak and arrogant. In any event, hearts that repose too much confidence in riches will become corrupted. Our wealth is indeed a fortunate circumstance, if it is rightly used. But at the most it is merely incidental to our real greatness. We should therefore never allow our distinctively American ideas to grow dim. These ideas which constitute our true glory, being intellectual and spiritual, are not going to tempt anybody to steal them. How could they be snatched from us? On the contrary, our highest achievement should be to hope that they will permeate the world. Then, so far from being weakened, we shall grow more strong, even should another nation arise who would take the leadership in our own ideology.

### *Catholics Understand Americanism*

The American concept of government was, as the Founding Fathers freely said, not altogether new, even though the United States was the first nation to put those ideas into practical effect, stating most clearly and cogently what was in their mind when they drew up the Constitution. The source most directly responsible in the formulation of our philosophy of government was John Locke. But Locke's ideas were not original with him; they had been largely derived by him from Hooker, and by Hooker these had been largely drawn from St. Thomas Aquinas. This is not to assert that the Constitution is scholastic in derivation, but it was at least in consonance with scholastic political theory, and it presented no difficulty to the Catholic mind. But now at last what had hitherto remained mere theory was implemented as a program



for practical use. That is why Brownson was able to say that "Catholics are better fitted by their religion to comprehend the real character of the American constitution, the moment they study it in the light of their own theology."

The American colonies had been prepared for their full freedom — at least in part — because they had been, until their rebellion, under English rule. Indeed at first the colonies thought of themselves as doing no more than demanding their rights as Englishmen, and the health of King George III was regularly drunk at Washington's mess. It is true that there were a few Americans — of whom the Catholic Charles Carroll of Carrollton was one — who from the first were what might be called "whole-hoggers," and who demanded absolute independence. If in the end moderate men like Washington, who would have been fully content — at any rate for the time being — with a compromise that would have been honorable to both sides, saw that there was no possibility of effecting a compromise with a stiff-necked King and Parliament, this was the British fault, though it is now admitted that the British had a very arguable case. Unfortunately, the idea of a commonwealth of nations had not developed far enough to be of any use. It was fortunate for the colonies that this was so, for nothing was left but to fight for complete independence.

It is not necessary to carry the general discussion further in this article but to come to the clauses regarding religion as found in the First and Fifth Amendments to the Constitution. The Catholic religion, as such, was not mentioned there, because in all the colonies there were not more than 30,000 Catholics, and nobody had the faintest notion that they would increase to a thousand times that number. But while the Federal Congress was constitutionally prohibited from establishing any religion, or from imposing any religious test for a federal office — clauses which proved to be of vastly more benefit to Catholics than any other denomination — it was taken for granted that Protestants would always be in the predominating majority and that the Catholics who had so signally proved their loyalty to the American cause presented no danger to anybody. The individual states were left free to do as they pleased about a religious establishment within their own confines, and also to demand a religious test for office. Several of them did

one or both for some years afterward, but gradually adopted what was enunciated in the Federal Constitution, though to this day relics of the old state of things (long since inoperative in practice) are to be found in the constitution of the state of New Hampshire. And though the Catholic Church in this country has now grown too powerful not to be treated with the utmost respect, André Siegfried, the author of one of the best books on America, says, truly enough, that "Protestantism is the only national religion, and to ignore that fact is to view the country from a false angle."

This, however, because of the hopeless divisions that exist among Protestants, gives at most a social prestige; from all legal disabilities Catholics are protected by the Constitution itself. All the same, a powerful pressure — mainly in the form of secularism — operates against us, and a far more rigid interpretation of the religious clauses of the Constitution are, in small and irritating ways, sometimes used against us, though not to our serious disadvantage. The separation of Church and State does not appear in the Federal Constitution, only the prohibition of the establishment of a *national* religion, and of religious tests being used in the national government. And while it cannot be said that Alfred E. Smith went down to defeat when he ran for the presidency in 1928 solely because he was a Catholic — for in that year any Democrat would have been defeated — there was what was in effect a kind of private nullification of the Fifth Amendment by large sections of the electorate. Even in this, though the voters were exercising their rights, anybody is free to vote against any candidate for religious reasons. Catholics, therefore, who wholeheartedly supported the American cause even before the Constitution was drawn up, have found in the Constitution the guarantee of religious liberty for themselves as well as for those of other faiths. But it implies rather the co-operation of Church and State than their separation in any absolute sense. The political idea embodied here is the firm basis of the Spiritual Heritage of America.

### *Building an American Culture*

So much for the charter of our liberties. The question arises: What use do we make of those liberties in building up a culture? At first the best brains in America were almost totally absorbed

by the immediate task — not merely the winning of political independence, but in carefully defining the precise nature of the government under which they wished to live. That task was of such an immensity that not much was left over for the cultivation of the arts. Therefore, though even during colonial days some poets and painters found employment for such gifts as they had, almost the only distinctively American art that came to full flower was that of domestic architecture; and the specimens of this that survive show that it was an adaptation or modification — forced upon the builders by the materials available — of the architectural style in vogue in England. In many ways this was actually an improvement, for while the Palladian mode was adopted, it took on a delicate grace when reproduced in wood.

Nevertheless, it was not long before there came to be a demand for something closer to the American spirit in poetry, the novel, and the drama. The early efforts in that direction were often, as might be expected, somewhat crude, so that many American artists — whether writers or painters — felt safer in following English models. James Fennimore Cooper, sick of the kind of milk and watery romances he found his wife reading, began to exploit the American Indians for his themes. Even Poe, who was to exercise a good deal of influence in Europe (especially France) was himself largely influenced by European traditions, even though his genius transcended and transmuted them. Even Hawthorne, our first great literary artist, while finding his best subjects in New England, also, as in *The Marble Faun*, utilized an Italian subject matter, though viewing it with American eyes. Herman Melville, who may be considered the earliest to make a complete breach with the European past, had to go to the South Seas when he was not producing strange and violent works of symbolism, such as *Moby Dick*. His reward was almost total neglect until the rediscovery of his greatness in modern times.

Yet more urbane forces were at work. Emerson, though he continued to take his good wherever he could find it, especially from a cloudy Oriental mysticism, was periodically emphatic in demanding an intellectual as well as a political independence. A writer of paragraphs rather than of essays — though one must not forget his early *English Traits* — he obtained here, as well as in England,



a considerable following. A later writer who was far more emphatic, Walt Whitman, some of whose work seemed shocking to his contemporaries, broke up the patterns of verse into long dithyrambs, and in his zest for frontier brotherhood, began shouting, somewhat unconvincingly, about his *Camerado* and the essential goodness of all things. Yet taken in small doses he was invigorating, and proved to be one of the formative forces of the young G. K. Chesterton. Most of his fellow poets stayed close to tradition, as did Bryant and Longfellow, yet even in them a new breath was felt.

But it is hardly necessary to examine in any detail the intellectual and artistic life of America, especially as it has been so admirably presented in the five large and illuminating studies of Van Wyck Brooks, now gathered under the general title of *Makers and Finders*. The American novel and drama were to come into their own, as was American poetry with Emily Dickinson, Edwin Arlington Robinson, and Robert Frost. Miss Dickinson's poetry, except for her mild innovations, might have been written anywhere by a sensitive, shy, coy spinster. Robinson made his reputation with his Arthurian poems, though in his later years his long poems have an American locale, and those of his early and middle period are brilliant and acid vignettes of New England character. But Frost from beginning to end is nothing but New England. Of the Middle-Western bards, such as Sandberg and Vachel Lindsay and Edgar Lee Masters, there is no need to speak. Yet upon this last poet, Sir John Squire, in his parody, "If Gray had written his Elegy in the Cemetery of Spoon River instead of that of Stoke Pages," offers the Commentary:

Here where the flattering and mendacious swarm  
Of lying epitaphs their secrets keep,  
At last incapable of further harm  
The lewd forefathers of the village sleep.

### American Catholic Writers

The contribution of American Catholic poets is of much less importance, but concerns us more closely. Yet only a few of our poets can be mentioned. Father Abram Ryan, the Vincentian who threw in his lot with the South during the Civil War, and who was once immensely popular, is now seen to have been at his best

in his vigorous soldierly pieces such as "The Conquered Banner" and at his worst in his religious poems. One wonders how a priest, of all people in the world, could have imagined that his ambitious "Song of the Mystic" had any relation to mysticism. The best that one can say of it is that it has his characteristic verve. Another unreconstructed Southerner, who served for a brief period in the Confederate Navy before being captured, was John Banister Tabb. He always exhibited the utmost delicacy, and was masterly within narrow limits, beyond which his sure good taste never permitted him to stray. Both of these poets were eclipsed in general estimation by Joyce Kilmer who, though not a bad poet, was puffed into fame by his heroic death and the fact that this country was looking for a counterpart of Rupert Brooke; Aline Kilmer, Joyce's wife, was, as her husband always recognized, a much better poet than himself. Yet all of these fell far short of Louise Imogen Guiney, an American who spent most of her life in England, though England never gave her anything like her due. This must be because the English expect Americans to be wild and woolly, like Whitman and Lindsay (in their very different ways), and show little interest in an austere mind, however sensitive, that works in their own tradition. The standard of technique, and always also the range, of Catholic poets has been in recent years much better, even if one may think that it is somewhat unfortunate that Gerard Manley Hopkins — a fine, if highly eccentric poet — has somewhat deflected them from the courses that the American genius should have followed.

Of our Catholic novelists, not much needs to be said, except that several of them, like Henry Harland and Marion Crawford, lived in Europe and neglected the rich material provided at home. It is rather strange that the best of American Catholic novelists — at any rate by far the best in my estimation — was the Anglo-Irishman Henry Longan Stuart with his presentation in *Weeping Cross*. Here we may find a triumph of style as well as an unflinchingly stark characterization.

Philosophy among us is found mainly as a general permeation, obtained through an indoctrination in the Catholic schools. Though there are a number of Catholic philosophical writers who have done good work, this, when it has not been unabashedly text-

bookish, has been a popularization. Perhaps the only person worthy the name of an original speculative thinker has been Orestes Brownson, for though all was grist that came to his mill, so that he derived many hints from European philosophers (few of whom were professedly Catholic), the result of the synthesis was of a unique kind. The grist invariably came out as Brownsonian grain.

It is in law rather than philosophy that American Catholics have distinguished themselves. The Supreme Court almost always has at least one Catholic upon its bench, and twice — in the cases of R. B. Taney and Edward Douglass White — the Chief Justice has been a Catholic. This does not mean, of course, that such men have used the Supreme Court for the obtaining of Catholic objectives; that would have been impermissible, and was moreover unnecessary: the American Constitution itself amply suffices.

### *The Catholic Church in the United States*

All this is part of the general American culture, but Catholics are well aware that sound culture, even when not explicitly Catholic in its mode of expression, invariably operates for the Catholic good; and for this they are duly grateful. Yet something must be said in conclusion about the organization of the Catholic Church in the United States. It was providential that the first bishop we had was John Carroll, of a family closely connected with the winning of American independence. Until then such few priests as were in the country, after the suppression of the Society of Jesus, were nominally under the jurisdiction of the bishop of the London District. But when the division of Carroll's enormous diocese occurred in 1808, the new bishops were for the most part Frenchmen of high culture and saintly character. It was perhaps inevitable that when the influx of the immigrants began, the Irish, and to some extent the Germans, showed some objection to the French domination. Though this did not mean — and has not meant to this day — that bishops whose native tongue was not English were never appointed, it did most providentially come about that the Irish became predominant in the hierarchy. They were of the race most fitted to guide the assimilation of Catholics of many ethnic origins — a knotty problem for a while, as the Poles and the French-Canadians and especially the Germans wished for priv-



ileges which, had they been granted, would have made Catholicism seem a foreign and exotic religion.

Though, because of the shortage of priests, large numbers of Catholics were lost to the Church, it is in America that the most numerous and best organized body of Catholics now exists. This was due to a sufficiency of the right sort of priests being eventually found — to that and to the saturation of the minds of the young in school and college. But if the Church was obliged to establish parochial schools, this was only because circumstances forced it to found such schools. Catholics are still very willing to enter the public school system, but are not with a good conscience able to do so. This is because the secularist spirit of that system is a grave danger to faith — not only to the Catholic faith, but to religion in any form. Yet in spite of all our heroic efforts, it is even now impossible to accommodate quite half of the American Catholic children in our own schools. Therefore, we have to make the best of such devices as so-called released time and Sunday schools, which though better than nothing, cannot accomplish as much as do the parochial schools.

Finally, it must be said that, as the Catholic Church in the United States is still in process of being built — despite all the great things that have been done — the American Catholic as a rule has been more preoccupied with the work of organization than with spiritual concerns. President Shuster of Hunter College said sixteen years ago: "As at present constituted, the Catholic body has virtually no use for intellectuals. . . . The educated Catholic has never been so much alone in the midst of his fellow men." The statement is excessively gloomy; at most one can say that this is too often the case. It was inevitable that American Catholics like Martha should be "careful about many things"; but the day of her sister Mary will surely arrive. The Liturgical Movement, so strong in the Middle West, is one indication that Mary's day is already dawning; others are the phenomenal increase of the contemplative Trappists, and the recent introduction among us of a Carthusian foundation. And, even if one does not hear very much about them, because their lives are buried in solitude and silence, there are a great many communities of contemplative nuns; the Second Order Dominicans, the Poor Clares, and the Carmelites

are cases in point. The American mind is becoming more richly disposed for contemplation; and the timely, vigorous work of the contemplative Carmelites in America (for instance: their refreshingly different kind of retreat, and their recent publication of works like SPIRITUAL LIFE, *Men in Sandals*, and *Conversation With Christ*) is a wonderful augury for the future.

Though the best of our spiritual reading still comes from Europe, a change can already be observed. The Catholic liturgy itself leads straight toward mysticism, and it must be said that American Catholics are often most eager to avail themselves of all the means of grace, especially in assisting at Mass and the frequentation of the Sacraments. In a society such as ours, which is already so well adapted to the untrammelled practice of religion, we have every reason to look with confidence to a life that can be lived *sub specie aeternitatis*. Even when not fully realized, it is *that* that is our heritage as American Catholics.

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# The Normalcy of Contemplation

*Father Michael of the Holy Family, O.C.D.*

## Contemplation Is Normal in the Development of the Life of Grace and Virtues.

THE question under discussion is, at the present state of theological development, still highly controverted and probably will remain so for some time to come.

Stated in different form, our question amounts to this: Is contemplation necessary for the attainment of perfect sanctity? And supposing that a person does not attain to perfect sanctity, can the soul make noteworthy progress in the spiritual life without the help of infused contemplation?

Amid all the confusion that accompanies our question, I feel that I would like to limit my remarks to the doctrine of St. John of the Cross, primarily because he is the Mystical Doctor of the Church and then, too, because authors on both sides of the question have often claimed his authority in support of their thesis.

The principal works of St. John of the Cross that I will use in this discussion are the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the *Dark Night of the Soul* since it was largely because of these books that he has been honored as a Doctor of the Universal Church. In these two treatises his complete doctrine is substantially contained.

In giving a definite answer to the question whether contemplation is necessary for the normal development of the life of grace and



virtues, much will depend on the definition of contemplation itself.

### What Is Contemplation?

According to St. John of the Cross, contemplation is nothing more nor less than a general loving knowledge that God infuses into the soul for the purpose of uniting it to Himself and purifying it from any obstacles to that union. Or to use his own words: "This is an infused and loving knowledge of God which enlightens the soul and at the same time enkindles it until it is raised up step by step even unto God its Creator."<sup>1</sup>

Though contemplation can be realized in souls under the most diverse forms, conditions, and degrees, it has the following characteristics: (*a*) It is essentially a loving knowledge (of faith); that is, it is a knowledge of something that is presented as *objectively* lovable. For this reason the soul not only knows but also loves because it is enamored of this object of its contemplation. (*b*) It is knowledge that comes through the exercise of the virtue of faith, consequently the soul has only a general and obscure knowledge of God and therefore must blindly adhere to this knowledge with the help of actual grace. (*c*) God infuses the loving knowledge of contemplation directly into the soul, without the aid of the senses. This loving knowledge is more perfect than the knowledge that the soul attained through meditation and as a result produces more profound and lasting fruits in the soul.

### Two Ways of Sanctity

It is well known that there are some spiritual theologians who hold that there are two ways of sanctity, an ascetical way and a mystical way, the one leading to an ascetical perfection, the other to a mystical perfection. Father Chrysogonus de Jesu Sacramentado, O.C.D., and others maintain that such a doctrine is to be found in the writings of St. John of the Cross. They use the *Ascent* and the *Dark Night* to prove their argument. Accordingly, the *Ascent* would deal with an ascetical way, sufficient in itself for sanctity. The doctrine of the *Dark Night*, on the other hand, would deal with a way of sanctity that is reserved for those souls whom God intends to lead by the mystical way of infused contemplation.

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<sup>1</sup> *Dark Night*, II, xviii, 8.

We hold that the *Ascent* and *Dark Night* taken together form one complete doctrinal synthesis. The one without the other would be incomplete. To relegate the *Ascent* to the ascetical way and the *Dark Night* to the mystical way would disrupt the unity of the Saint's spiritual doctrine. St. John regards both the active and passive nights as essential to attain the union which he proposes. It might be well to remark that the passive nights are strictly of a mystical nature and are caused by contemplation which God infuses into the soul.

We can prove our point from a brief examination of the very first paragraph of the first book of the *Ascent*. In this passage, St. John of the Cross gives us the general division of the work he proposes to write. We must admit that the text is not as clear as we might wish. It is nevertheless sufficiently exact in its general outline to prove that the passive purifications are an integral and essential part of his doctrine.

In the first paragraph the Saint sets before our eyes the end to be attained — "the state of perfection." He tells us that in order to attain this state of perfection the soul ordinarily must pass through two principal kinds of night.

In the second paragraph he tells us that the first kind of night which "is of the sensual part of the soul" is to be treated in the first part of the *Ascent*. The second kind of night, which is of the spiritual part of the soul, is to be treated in the second and third parts of the *Ascent*. The Saint then adds some very significant words: "with respect to the activity of the soul." The first three books of the *Ascent*, therefore, are to deal with an active night of the senses and an active night of the spirit.

Toward the end of the same paragraph, St. John tells us that he is going to treat of the passivity of the soul in the fourth part of the *Ascent*. In the third paragraph he makes it clear that there is also a passive night of sense and a passive night of spirit.

From these first three paragraphs of the *Ascent* we can clearly see that the Saint intends to divide his work in the following manner:

|               |   |                         |                     |
|---------------|---|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Active Night  | { | Of sense . . . . .      | Part One            |
|               |   | Of spirit . . . . .     | Parts Two and Three |
| Passive Night |   | Of sense and spirit . . | Part Four           |

All who have studied the question agree that the first, second, and third parts of this division correspond respectively to the first, second, and third books of the *Ascent*. But the *Ascent*, as we know it, has only three books, the fourth seems to have been omitted.

We have, however, another work of the Saint known as the *Dark Night of the Soul*. It contains that doctrine which the Saint promised to treat in the *Ascent*. The *Dark Night* deals with the passive nights of the sense and spirit which, according to the original plan of the Saint, should be discussed in the fourth part of the *Ascent*. Hence, even apart from the question as to whether the *Ascent of Mount Carmel* and the *Dark Night of the Soul* are separate treatises or whether they form one composite whole, it is clear that the doctrine of the passive nights outlined in the *Dark Night* are the fulfillment of the promise made by the Saint in the opening paragraphs of the *Ascent* and therefore pertain to the essence of his spiritual doctrine.

One might ask whether his doctrine is for all, or whether it is only for a few contemplative souls. I think the answer to this question can be found in the writings of the Saint, particularly in the *Ascent of Mount Carmel*.

He tells us in that work that he wants to treat of the "manner of arriving at the heights of the mountain which is the high state of perfection which we call union of the soul with God." He then goes on to enumerate the different phases of the journey up the mountain of perfection and concludes: "Of all these, with the Divine favour, we shall endeavour to say something, so that each soul who reads this may be able to see something of the road that he ought to follow, if he aspires to attain to the summit of this Mount."

He concedes that the matter he will treat is lofty and obscure, but he declares that it contains "solid and substantial instruction, as well suited to one kind of person as to another if they desire to pass to the detachment of spirit, which is here treated."

It is true he declares in the last paragraph of the Prologue of the *Ascent* that his "principal intent was not to address all, but rather certain persons of our sacred Order of Mount Carmel of the primitive observance, both friars and nuns — since they have desired me to do so — to whom God is granting the favour of setting them on the road to this Mount." But he wrote for them,



(a) because they asked him to write about such matters, and (b) because they better understood the doctrine of "poverty of spirit." It is to be remembered, too, that he did not prepare this work for publication, but intended it to be a practical solution to the problems of those for whom he wrote it. But from the quotations we have given from the Prologue and from statements that are constantly recurring, it is beyond doubt that he felt that his doctrine was of value to all.

St. John of the Cross regards the passive purifications of sense and spirit as necessary for the attainment of union. This simply means that contemplation is necessary to attain union, since the passive purifications are caused by contemplation. Speaking of the passive nights he writes: "This night, which as we say, is *contemplation*, produces in spiritual persons two kinds of darkness or purgation, corresponding to the two parts of man's nature — namely, the sensual and the spiritual."<sup>2</sup> Elsewhere in the same book he tells us: "This dark night is an inflowing of God into the soul, which purges it from its ignorances and imperfections, habitual, natural, and spiritual, and which is called by contemplatives infused contemplation, or mystical theology."<sup>3</sup>

In the first six chapters of the *Dark Night*, St. John speaks of the imperfections of beginners. For him beginners are "those that meditate upon the spiritual road."<sup>4</sup> He tells us of these imperfections in order to show the necessity of the passive night of sense. "Wherefore, to the end that we may the better understand and explain what night is this through which the soul passes, and for what cause God sets it therein, it will be well here to touch first of all upon certain characteristics of beginners . . . in order that, realizing the weakness of the state wherein they are, they may take courage, and may desire that God may bring them into this night, wherein the soul is strengthened and confirmed in the virtues, and made ready for the inestimable delights of the love of God."<sup>5</sup>

### *Passive Night of Sense*

The imperfections which St. John of the Cross mentions are most certainly incompatible with sanctity or perfect love of God. He

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, I, viii, 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, I, i, 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, II, v, 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, I, i, 1.

speaks of the spiritual pride and presumption of beginners, of their spiritual avarice, luxury, gluttony, envy, and sloth. The Saint indicates "how like to children are these persons in all they do."<sup>6</sup> Beginners must rid themselves of such imperfections if they wish to enter the state of proficients. St. John of the Cross tells us that the passive night of the senses rids the soul of these imperfections. "And it will also be seen," he writes, "how many blessings the dark night of which we shall afterwards treat brings with it, since it cleanses the soul and purifies it from all these imperfections."<sup>7</sup>

St. John of the Cross tells us when the passive night of the senses begins. "Into this dark night souls begin to enter when God draws them forth from the state of beginners — which is the state of those that meditate on the spiritual road — and begins to set them in the state of progressives — which is that of those who are already contemplatives — to the end that, after passing through it, they may arrive at the state of the perfect, which is that of the Divine union of the soul with God."<sup>8</sup> Hence infused contemplation begins relatively early in the spiritual life. It marks the passage from the way of beginners to the way of proficients, from the purgative way to the illuminative way.

Some might say that the soul could be purified of its defects by other ascetical practices; thus they would deny the necessity of the passive purification of sense, which God works in the soul by means of infused contemplation. St. John of the Cross recognizes no other means of purification than the passive night of sense. "But neither from these imperfections," he writes, "nor from those others can the soul be perfectly purified until God brings it into the passive purification of that dark night whereof we shall speak presently. . . . Because however greatly the soul itself labors, it cannot actively purify itself so as to be in the least degree prepared for the Divine union of perfection of love, if God takes not its hand and purges it in that dark fire."<sup>9</sup> The soul actively seeks to purify itself by the practices of the ascetical life. However, by these practices it cannot "in the least degree" prepare itself for Divine union. God must bring it into the passive night of sense. It must be noted that we are not only dealing with preparation for union, but

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, I, i, 3.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, I, i, 3.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, I, i, 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, I, iii, 3.

with the actual purification of the soul from defects and imperfections which are definitely incompatible with sanctity. Concluding his description of the defects of beginners, St. John writes: "Let it suffice here to have described these imperfections . . . so that it may be seen how greatly they need God to set them in the state of proficient. . . . For, however assiduously the beginner practices the mortification in himself of all these actions and passions of his, he can never completely succeed — very far from it — until God works it in him passively by means of the purgation of the said night."<sup>10</sup>

### *Passive Night of Spirit*

In Book II of the *Dark Night*, St. John of the Cross treats of the dark night of the spirit. Once again he makes clear that this night, which directly precedes union of the soul with God, is a necessary part of the soul's spiritual journey. Just as the senses must be purified by the passive night of sense, so the spirit must be purified by the passive night of spirit. Without this night the purification of the soul could not be completed.

In Chapters One and Two of the second book of the *Dark Night*, the imperfections of the proficient are briefly described. We are told that some are habitual, others actual. "The habitual imperfections are the imperfect habits and affections which have remained all the time in the spirit; and are like roots, to which the purgation of sense has been unable to penetrate."<sup>11</sup> The actual imperfections are many and varied, and all are not liable to them in the same way. At times the soul may believe in vain visions; it may become proud and presumptuous; "it may become bold with God, and lose holy fear, which is the key and the custodian of all the virtues."<sup>12</sup>

St. John tells us that such imperfections are found to some extent in all proficient. He knows but one means by which they can be eradicated — the passive night of spirit. Only this night can get down to the very roots of the imperfections of the soul. ". . . None of these proficient," he writes, "however greatly he may have exerted himself, is free, at best, from many of those natural affec-

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, I, vii, 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, II, ii, 1.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, II, ii, 3.



tions and imperfect habits, the purification whereof we said is necessary if a soul is to pass to Divine union."<sup>13</sup>

St. John of the Cross recognizes no other means of completely eradicating the imperfections of the soul than the passive night of spirit. This purification is effected by means of a "pure and dark contemplation."<sup>14</sup> Without the passive purification of spirit these defects remain in the soul. Consequently without the passive purification of spirit there can be no sanctity.

### Why So Few

It is beyond dispute that all souls do not arrive at that perfect state where they are transformed into God through love. Can it be that God will not give all souls the grace of contemplation and therefore many are not able to arrive at the heights of sanctity? Or is it because many souls do not prepare themselves for the reception of this grace?

Those who hold that contemplation is for a select few very often quote the following text in support of their contention: "Not all who consciously walk in the way of the spirit are brought to contemplation, nor even the half of them — why, He best knows."<sup>15</sup> Taken out of context, this phrase would have the meaning that they assign to it, but taken with the rest of the chapter we find that the Saint nowhere states that those who do not have contemplation nevertheless arrive at perfect sanctity. On the contrary, he makes it clear that those souls retain their faults and imperfections which prevent them from perfect union with God.

The reason why so few arrive at union is given in the *Living Flame of Love*: "And here it behooves us to note the reason why there are so few that attain to this lofty state of the perfection of union with God. It must be known that it is not because God is pleased that there should be few raised to this high spiritual state, for it would rather please Him that all souls should be perfect, but it is rather that He finds few vessels which can bear so high and lofty a work. For, when He proves them in small things and finds them weak . . . and so He goes no farther with their purification,

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, II, iii, 4.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, II, iii, 3.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, I, ix, 9.

neither does He lift them up from the dust of the earth."<sup>16</sup> It is clear in this text that the chief reason is the lack of generosity and co-operation on the part of the soul and that God would desire to grant contemplation to all.

And now to summarize very briefly:

1. In this short paper we have shown what contemplation is according to the mind of John of the Cross and that it does not require any extraordinary or unusual mystical experiences. It is simply a loving infused knowledge of God and divine things.

2. We have shown that St. John has but one spiritual doctrine. In his writings there is no foundation for saying that he taught two ways of sanctity, the one ascetical and the other mystical. He teaches one way of sanctity, which involves contemplation.

3. This doctrine has a universal value for all souls.

4. In fact, this doctrine is necessary for all because the passive nights are indispensable not only as a preparation for the union he proposes but also for the purification of the soul from the many defects and imperfections which are incompatible with true sanctity. He knows of no other means for the attainment of complete purification than the passive nights of sense and spirit.

In conclusion we hold that contemplation is normal in the development of the life of grace and virtues.

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<sup>16</sup> *Flame* B, 2, 27.

## BOOK REVIEWS

IN SOFT GARMENTS, by Monsignor Ronald Knox,  
Sheed and Ward, New York, 1956, 234 pp., \$3.00

Throughout the reading of this exceptional book I had the constant impression that I was seated in a room with the students at Oxford listening to the wise, human, living words of Monsignor Ronald Knox. That's how alive and true this book is. It is, as you might have suspected, a collection of talks given by Monsignor Knox to the Catholic students at Oxford when he was their chaplain. Actually the talks represent a course in apologetics, or in the words of the author: "I have tried to deal, unprofessionally, with some of the hesitations that most naturally occur to us Catholics, when we compare our intellectual commitments with the current thought of the present day." What an admirable job the esteemed Monsignor has done! I couldn't help reflecting as I enjoyed his close reasoning, his wonderfully apt illustrations, his captivating style how fortunate those students at Oxford were from 1926 to 1938 when they had such a peerless master as their spiritual guide. Many sacerdotal readers probably found themselves wishing that their seminary course in apologetics had been as vital, interesting, and rewarding as these random talks of Monsignor Knox.

There is a restraint, a quality one might almost call gentleness here which gives a distinctive character to this book. The hand is never heavy here, nor is the voice loud and piercing; yet the truth comes through with amazing power and clarity and persuasiveness.

An example of his unique skill, his brilliant reasoning is his treatment of the proof of God's existence from conscience. Here he very adroitly shows the necessity for the existence of a Supreme Mind from a consideration of the meanings of "mind" and "matter."

The book is studded with memorable passages. This one on the meaning of true love is fairly typical: "Love is essentially the effort to sacrifice yourself, to immolate yourself, to another person. And passion is essentially the effort to sacrifice, to immolate, another person to yourself."

His final words to his students have exceptional value, for he urges them to cultivate and strengthen in their lives that noble and oft-forgotten virtue of tenacity — the habit of holding stubbornly to that which is worthwhile and precious. Certainly his readers will be better able to



hang on to the priceless truths of the Faith after being enlightened and uplifted by the living words of Monsignor Knox.

Father Patrick McNamara, O.S.M., Carteret, N. J.

**THE LIGHT BEYOND: A Study of Hawthorne's Theology,**  
by Rev. Leonard J. Pick,  
Newman Press, Westminster, Md., 1955, 208 pp., \$3.50

As a study of Hawthorne's theology, *The Light Beyond* has for its thesis the theory that Hawthorne's beliefs concerning God, man, sin, and religion are not Calvinistic but are basically orthodox in the light of Catholic doctrine. Father Pick's study re-emphasizes Hawthorne's preoccupation with moral evil and its effect upon the spirit of man while it demonstrates that his essential faith in a merciful Divine Providence refutes any claim that the artist was influenced by the fatalistic teaching of predestination. The arbitrary system set up by the author requires the introductory chapters on God and on man, both of which seem repetitious, so closely are they related to the central question in most of Hawthorne's writing: man's involvement with moral evil. It is not surprising that the largest and most significant section of the book is devoted to sin. However even this matter suffers from the scientific sorting and labeling process the finality of which, implied or explicit, ignores the artistry with which Hawthorne explores the human spirit in its dealings with evil without ever dissipating the mystery enshrouding it.

Father Pick strives to establish Hawthorne's theological position as essentially Catholic, insisting that "Errant Catholic moral rather than errant Catholic dogma was at the bottom of his [Hawthorne's] dissatisfaction with the Roman Catholic Church." Because Truth, the heritage of the Church, is one, her claim upon sincere believers in any point of her dogma is obvious. Likewise, Hawthorne's thinking on institutionalized religion must be considered in a treatment of his theology. But Hawthorne's literary work gives every evidence that the writer was exploring human attitudes and reactions as affected by beliefs that were intuited rather than accepted on the authority of a teacher. Father Pick acknowledges the unorganized character of these beliefs and even recognizes that in many cases an interpretation of the problem of evil is only faintly implied. But his assumption of an orthodox foundation on Catholic dogma tends to obscure the uncertainty that underlies even the most moving of Hawthorne's expressions of faith.

Strictly speaking, theology, as a science, must be systematized; but Hawthorne is an artist whose art itself results from his experimental efforts to probe the meaning of sin without attempting or being able to attempt a definition of precisely what he believed. To speak of his theology in terms of an organized pattern of beliefs is to introduce an element foreign to the character of the artist and therefore, of his art. *The Light Beyond* fits Hawthorne's religious thinking into a pattern of Christian doctrine and, taking advantage of his avowed interest in Catholicism, proceeds justifiably to claim his essentially Catholic attitude toward many articles of Faith. But Hawthorne's writings lose depth and complexity in the process by which the uncertainty underlying his questions and problems is ignored. Less insistence upon the orthodox system and more consideration of the departures from it (which are duly acknowledged but always subordinated to the main thesis) might produce a more exact, if less logically organized, equation between Hawthorne's theology and his art.

Sister M. Anne Monica, C.S.C., St. Mary's College, Notre Dame, Ind.

**LOVE OR PERISH, by Smiley Blanton, M.D.,**  
**Simon & Schuster, New York, 1956, 212 pp., \$3.50**

Smiley Blanton, M.D., a leading psychiatrist on Norman Vincent Peale's staff of eminent consultants, has written a book which ranks as one of the best sellers in the *New York Times* book review. It takes its place alongside Mr. Peale's *Power of Positive Thinking* and Shindler's *How to Live 365 Days a Year*.

It seems that Americans are trying to increase their spiritual values through purely natural means. *Love or Perish*, along with the books mentioned above, tries to explain that modern man must cease to be self-centered and place his interest in persons and events foreign to himself if he wishes to be happy. Unless man expands mentally and spiritually, life becomes stagnant for him, and he is locked in his own little world.

Dr. Blanton explains that love is like a magnetic force binding all creatures together, from the lowest one-cell animal to the highest form of human existence. Just as the human body is composed of individual cells, each working for the good of another, so man by the force of love must by his very nature work for the good of others or, like the individual cell, left to himself he will disintegrate and fail to produce the efforts of his creation. Besides this rational love, every human being has a

sexual love or instinct by which he expresses himself mentally and emotionally. The perfection of this love is used in the marital life. Dr. Blanton does not give the spiritual reasons of why we should love one another. In fact, in the last paragraph of his book, he says: "Happiness is based upon love and love is accomplished only through the knowledge of the truth." He leaves his readers floundering, for he does not explain what that truth might be. From the beginning, of course, Dr. Blanton makes it clear that he is speaking as a psychiatrist, and not as a theologian. Nevertheless, without a spiritual concept, man could not carry out the ideals contained in this little book. For it is only in the light of deep-rooted faith that the beauty of love, as explained by Dr. Blanton, can really be appreciated and actually lived in this mortal existence.

*Love or Perish* is a well-written book, and could be read with profit by a discerning reader. But it should be read with caution and the proper permission.

Father Alphonse, O.C.D., Boston, Mass.

**CARMELITE DEVOTIONS, and Prayers for Special Feasts of the Liturgical Year, compiled by a Carmelite Tertiary, The Discalced Carmelite Nuns (4803 West Wells Street), Milwaukee, 320 pp., \$1.50 (5 or more copies, \$1.25 each)**

"The object of our Third Order, following the example of the friars and nuns of the Order is to give glory to God, to honor Our Blessed Lady of Carmel, and to aid our holy Mother the Church by prayer." *From the Rule of The Third or Secular Order of Our Blessed Lady of Mount Carmel and St. Teresa of Jesus.*

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This spiritual fare is only a part: there also are the novenas tertiaries, by virtue of the object of their Rule, make with fervor: Chair of Unity Octave, Pentecost, novenas to the great Carmelite saints, as well as prayers for special and great feasts of the Church's Liturgical Seasons. Then there are little surprises; happy moments when we discover the Morning Offering for those enrolled in the Scapular, special prayers for the Missions, special prayers composed by the Holy Mother of the Order, St. Teresa of Avila. The Particular Examen is included, and material for the half-hour Meditation each tertiary must make daily.

The *Vade Mecum* of the Third Order says the Third Order Rule is "The outline of a life which should tend with all its strength toward prayer and contemplation." How grateful all tertiaries must be to the compiler of *Carmelite Devotions*. A life must have nourishment for strength, and the Carmelite tertiary draws nourishment from the living roots of the Order, its traditions of sanctity, its spiritual family, its saints. To make all this available and easily accessible, as here, is to open the gates and show how goodly is the road to the Mountain. "I have brought you into the land of Carmel, that you may eat the fruits and the best things thereof."

Each tertiary will want two or more copies of this long desired book for personal, constant use (one to be kept with the Manual and the *Vade Mecum*; another to leave in the handbag with the Little Office). Each tertiary will also desire extra copies for gifts to loved ones who, though they may not be tertiaries, yet also are devoted to Our Lady of Mount Carmel and cherish her Order.

Mary Kiely, Providence, R. I.

CONVERSATION WITH CHRIST, by Peter Thomas  
Rohrbach, O.C.D.,  
Fides, Chicago, Ill., 1956, 171 pp., \$3.75

It is 1956. And it is incredible: this book was not written until now.

St. Paul told the Thessalonians to "pray without ceasing." At first that sounds impossible; and it makes us uneasy when we reflect that this is not a counsel, but a command which cannot be ignored. And yet, it is really quite simple. It is just as if Christ said "you must keep on breathing or else you will die." The only difference is that breathing is instinctive; prayer is not. But by rights prayer ought to be just as instinctive as breathing. But it isn't: so we have got to learn how to pray. Prayer



is as important for the life of the soul as breathing is for the life of the body. That is why the Gospel tells us "we ought to pray and never to give up." And so a good handbook on how to pray is just about the most important thing in the world. That is why it seems so odd having had to wait till now. And in the face of such persistent demands!

Men who have had some experience with spiritual direction and who have conducted retreats know the value of this book.

The orientation, development, and intensity of one's spiritual life depend upon the tenor of one's prayer: which is the source of grace, the expression of supernatural life, and as St. Teresa says, "the royal road to heaven." Knowing, therefore, the art of prayer is an indispensable requisite for the director and the directed.

Whenever retreatants are consulted about conference material, they invariably express a desire for conferences on prayer. This is true of religious and lay groups alike; and even teenagers, who most frequently prefer the topic of prayer to that of dating, etc.

Nothing catapults a person into an insatiable and untiring pursuit of a knowledge of prayer so much as a little knowledge of prayer; which is good: since a little knowledge is a dangerous thing — particularly in the realm of the spirit, in the art of prayer. And so the most ardent and persistent imperative of people interested in the spiritual life turns out to be a demand for books on prayer.

Until now (1956. Really!) the incessant plea has not been adequately met. The best we could do was refer the interested party to Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross — these stalwart saints who have delineated so accurately and splendidly the meaning, process, and growth of prayer, that they have been designated by the Church to be the official guardians and directors in the vast fertile field of man's intimate and highly personal communion with God. But that meant paging through volumes of material so rich, profound, and varied that the tyro reader would frequently be either stayed off by what was formidable and forbidding, or confused by what was irrelevant and incomprehensive. A couple of other books could have been recommended, like Leen's *Progress Through Mental Prayer*, or Boylan's *Difficulties*. But, in spite of their inherent excellence, these were either too broad or too narrow to be enough. The *Spiritual Exercises* of St. Ignatius were fine. But countless beginners in the art of prayer were being bogged down by the method: either their minds were not orderly, logical, and systematic enough to cope with the brilliant, disciplined mind of Ignatius, or they needed more explanation of the *method* than was available.

Father Peter Thomas has solved this problem by culling from St.

Teresa and the great masters of the spiritual life all the significant and relevant data, and weaving it into the fine, finished fabric that is this book: *Conversation With Christ, An Introduction to Mental Prayer*.

The author pursues his purpose swiftly and straightforwardly. There is not an extra page; few words could be deleted without detriment. Not only is this good material, it is exquisite prose. There is no sermonizing; just a crisp, sharp flow of language that says what it wants to say. Seldom do spiritual writers achieve such a flawless mastery of style. His writing is terse, incisive, and singularly clear.

There are just a few books that I like to keep handy all of the time because of their daily usefulness and their classical dimensions (Chesteron defines a *classic* as a book that is contemporary with every age). And they are all how-to-do-it books: *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer Adler, *The Art of Teaching* by Gilbert Highet, and *The Art of Thinking* by Ernest Dimnet.

This new book on how to pray by Father Peter Thomas, O.C.D. (Dis-calced Carmelites do not ordinarily use their last names) sits now on our shelf of predilection with that incomparable trilogy.

Fr. William, O.C.D., Boston, Massachusetts

## HOW TO PRAY: The Chapters on Prayer from *The School of Jesus Christ*, by Jean-Nicholas Grou of the Society of Jesus, translated by Joseph Dalby, D.D.,

Harper & Brothers, New York, 154 pp., \$3.00

Evaluating Père Grou's treatise on prayer requires that we consider the man himself and the times in which he lived, for both have set a special seal upon his work.

Joseph Dalby in his introduction tells us that Jean-Nicholas Grou was born in 1730 in France. Thus we realize he must have grown up in that era so restless, so influenced by the new philosophers Diderot, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau; that era which declared reason sovereign, and defied the truths of Revelation. Jean-Nicholas Grou however became an humble Jesuit and lived with holiness, devoting his life in the Society to spiritual writing and preaching, and the love of interior prayer. When the French Revolution broke, he fled to England. There it was that out of his last years, spent in solitude and abnegation, he developed a major spiritual work, *The School of Jesus Christ*. The chapters from it on prayer, often quoted in anthologies, are now reprinted as one small, neatly bound volume. They form a little classic

on prayer: theological thought presented in the phrasing of every man.

Doctor Dalby quotes John Mason Neale saying at the turn of the century: "The spirit of Père Grou is almost identical with that embodied in our sound old English ascetic books."

Père Grou's style is essentially masculine, austere, yet devotional. The main source of quotation all through is Jesus Christ. Each chapter commences with references to Scripture. Each chapter concludes with a prayer of petition for the virtues discussed. He is careful to stop wherever necessary and clarify when he is referring to infused prayer. In turn he discusses the nature of prayer, vocal prayer, prayer of action, prayer of suffering, and prayer of the heart which he also calls prayer of simple regard. Standing as he does at the widening of the breach in pious Christian living, he pleads for piety with a magnificent chapter titled "Common Prayer." Today when secularism has widened that breach into a chasm, it reads as a more tremendous challenge than when first penned. The great chapter in the book is, I believe, Chapter Eight, "Continual Prayer." The concluding section is his study of the Lord's Prayer.

Père Grou's keynote of approach is his statement: "To learn to pray is to sanctify oneself." He does not deal with the apostolic extension of this fact but builds a solid and progressive pattern within the limits of that statement. He gives instruction for guiding children into interior prayer (p. 68). Over and over again he sets forth that prayer for which the Sacred Heart has begged: Père Grou calls it: "The essence of prayer . . . prayer of the heart . . . it is love which is the voice of the heart." In "Common Prayer" he advocates reviving the old Christian custom of "prayer said in common, morning and evening, in Christian families and houses." He devotes some superb pages to reminding us that the merit of common prayer is charity . . . "It is in order to keep . . . this virtue alive amongst the faithful that He has bestowed this privilege on united prayer." Quietly and devoutly throughout in clear, unadorned, yet strangely vital prose, he takes up the varied obstacles to be expected in prayer—distraction, impatience, self-love, monotony—and the question of methods. Not alone for the cloister. For the world. The motif he insists on is tranquillity in God. Yet this is not a manual of direction. States of prayer, where indicated, are described in only limited and simple terms. From the first page to the last, his object is to bring mankind to an appreciation of the dignity, the importance, of continued, regular prayer in our lives, thus to make of us true Christians and achieve "Interior teaching of grace which not only enlightens the mind, but stirs up the will to action."

When we come to "The Lord's Prayer" quite naturally St. Teresa's famous *Pater Noster* chapters in her *Way of Perfection* come to mind. However we find that while each meditation by Père Grou is subjectively the same as St. Teresa's reflections, we have a surprise when he takes up our Lord's words "Give us this day our daily bread." I suppose it even startles us not to find Père Grou making mention of the Eucharist in this meditation but he is indeed a man of his time, and already the seeds of rising greed and power were thrusting up. So he takes the opportunity to integrate a special emphasis on social justice here, so fine and so thorough it might be termed an anticipated brief of *Rerum Novarum*, masterfully applied for the individual soul.

There is no Imprimatur. Perhaps omission of it is due to desire not to scare off interested non-Catholics for whom an Imprimatur is often a bugaboo. However Catholics will note the translation "has been freshly done from the French edition of Father Doyotte." Also a judicious editorial footnote seems necessary for lay readers on page 27, paragraphs 1 and 3, to clarify Père Grou's references to the prayer of Jews as referring to the New Testament.

In conclusion this reviewer confesses to having been diverted with a persistent curiosity on a very minor statement. In his chapter "Common Prayer," Père Grou notes that the rising and retiring routine of monastic life derives from the custom of early Christian families. If this is so, it opens up an absorbing trend of thought. But is it?

Mary Kiely, Providence, R. I.

## OUR FATHER: A Handbook for Meditation,

Karl Becker and Marie Peter, compilers and editors;  
Ruth Bethel, translator.

Regnery Co., Chicago, Ill., 1956, 325 pp.

The book *Our Father* is a compilation of excerpts selected from various texts that have been written on the Lord's Prayer from earliest Christian times down to our own day. The editors followed no particular plan of selection beyond that of personal preference, favoring those texts that appealed to them from Christian Western culture. Hence, a surprisingly mixed group, become as one in the leaven of the common Fatherhood of God, is presented to the reader: The Church Fathers are ranged beside such creative artists as Sigrid Undset, Charles Peguy, and Richard Crashaw; the thoughts of anonymous authors are given place with those of such currently popular writers as Father Gerald



Vann and Doctor Roman Guardini; even a few eighteenth century Protestant Pietists are allotted brief and scattered moments to speak in the imposing company of St. Thomas Aquinas and St. Teresa of Avila.

In spite of the impressive list of commentators that the *Our Father* offers, it was not the purpose of the editors to prepare a work for scholars. The book is intended for the man who is attempting to make prayer his most important business. It is a book that could provide much and fruitful matter for personal meditation, study club discussions, or for sermons. To read *Our Father* rapidly or consecutively would be to vitiate its purpose. It will not become a "popular" book for devotional or spiritual reading — it was not intended to be — but it could well become, as its subtitle suggests, a valuable handbook for meditation on the prayer of all prayers.

The greater portion of the book is devoted to commentaries by the editors on the seven petitions of the Our Father, followed by appropriate selections. Chapters are also devoted to considerations of the place of the Lord's Prayer in Church liturgy, in the Mass, in prayer, and in Christian life through the ages.

Whatever provided the impetus for such a work as *Our Father*, possibly the carnage of World War II or its aftermath, it resulted in a strong desire on the part of Karl Becker to lead others to the conviction of the Fatherhood of God and its concomitant, the brotherhood of man; a desire to see man truly man by hallowing God's name; to see the community of mankind live humanly worthy and humanly appropriate lives, and thus be open to God and ready for God.

Sister Mary Fanchon, C.S.J.  
Milton, Mass.

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